

Frenchmen Dodé/Moreau Take Early Lead At Dart 18 Worlds 2009

Pols brothers win first race Aruba Heineken Catamaran Regatta

PALM BEACH -On Monday November 23 2009, title defender Emmanuel Dodé and his crew Fred Moreau from France took an early lead at the Dart 18 Worlds in Aruba. The Atol Sailing Team won the only race of the day, sailed in a 25-30 knots offshore breeze. The Britons David Lloyd and Joanna Jones-Pierce finished second, although they led in the first lap. The German team Matthias Huber and Dominik Volke followed in third place. Xander and Mark Pols (NED) were the only sailors who could keep their F18 upright in the Aruba Heineken Catamaran Regatta.

They won by miles.

The Dutchmen and newcomers to the Dart 18 class Ruud Goudriaan and Bart Damen nailed the start, closely followed by the French and British favorites. In the first beat, they went to the left with the rest of the fleet, whereas Lloyd and Jones-Pierce took a flyer to the right side of the windy course. Lloyd: "We made the brave call to tack off, because we expected the wind to be more clear in that corner with less buildings onshore." That tactic paid off and the

British couple were first at the top mark, followed by Dodé/Moreau and Goudriaan/Damen.

The French and British Dart 18's came together in the gate. Dodé: "We had water, so we could cross in front of them, but then we made a mistake, so they passed us again." The Frenchmen pushed hard and took the lead in the next lap. Dodé: "Our speed was a little bit better and that is how we won." Lloyd and Jones-Pierce decided not to take any risk and save some energy. Jones-Pierce: "It was incredibly windy and on most of the other boats, the crew is sheeting. I think I am the lightest on the wire and David takes the sheet, but we handled the boat right in these conditions. I am very happy with this result." And so was Matthias Huber, who overtook the Dutchmen only a few meters from the finish line: "They pitch poled and that is how we passed them."

Aruba Heineken Catamaran Regatta

The Dutch F18 teams of Xander/Mark Pols and John Moret/Paul Smitsaert were smoking today. Just minutes after the gun, they already



left their thirteen competitors far behind. The Pols brothers hoisted the spinnaker first and kept their Nacra Infusion upright. Moret and Smitsaert did not succeed in keeping their heads dry. They capsized twice and still managed to finish second, followed by the German duo Dieter Maurer and Gunther Mortl. They were the only finishers. Xander Pols: "At the committee boat, I did not expect they would continue the starting procedure. I can't

even remember the last time I sailed in such a strong breeze. The only tactic was to choose the right moment for a gibe, so we would not nose dive."

All racing in the afternoon was cancelled due to the stormy conditions. However, tomorrow's lay day will be used to catch up on two lost races. It will be an early start for the competitors, as the first start will be at 10 am. But now it is time for Happy Hour on the beach and the Pelican dinner party on the pier.

Top five Dart 18 Worlds 2009:

FRA - Emmanuel Dodé & Fred Moreau

GBR - David Lloyd & Joanna Jones-Pierce

GER - Matthias Huber & Dominik Volke

NED - Ruud Goudriaan & Bart Damen

FRA - Thierry & Christine Wibaux

Top three Aruba Heineken Catamaran Regatta:

NED - Xander & Mark Pols

NED - John Moret & Paul Smitsaert

GER - Dieter Maurer & Gunther Mortl

In addition to the title sponsors Aruba Tourism Authority and Heineken Aruba NV, this year's Aruba Heineken Catamaran Regatta and Dart 18 World Championships are also supported by Martinair, GILS Worldwide, Setar, Holiday Inn, Does & Cadushi, Tropical Bottling Company, Coca Cola, AWA, Aruba Aloë, VR Shipping, Aruba Watersports Center, Palm Tours, Pelican Watersports, Seaworld Explorer, Moomba, Zwitserleven, TNG, Patria and AMI Kappers. ☐



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At the Radisson Aruba Resort

Cara & Thomas say I do as the sunsets



PALM BEACH – Thomas Bongiovanni and Cara LaScala exchanged rings and vows during beautiful beach blessing at the Aruba Radisson Resort with Rev. Geoffrey witnesses by friends and family. Mrs. and Mrs. Bongiovanni said I do just as the sun set into the Caribbean Sea before family and friends. After the signing of documents, the couple with their wedding party continued their celebration with a cocktail reception upstairs. The beautiful dream wedding ceremony was coordinated by Lisa Dammerman, Wedding Coordinator of the Radisson Aruba Resort. Congratulations from Aruba



Today and Bella Aruba Photography. □

~ Photos by Julia Renfro ~



Thanksgiving Buffet at La Vista Restaurant
Thursday November 26th 2009
5.00 PM - 10.30 PM

Soup

Roasted Pumpkin Bisque

Pasta Station

Fettuccini, Linguini, Farfalle, Shrimp, Scallops, Clams, Mussels
 Roasted Vegetables, Grilled Chicken

Carving Station

Rosemary and Garlic Spiked Prime Rib w/ Sauce au Jus
 Honey Glazed Ham with Cinnamon- Pineapple Sauce

Pizza Station

Assorted Homemade Pizzas

Entrees

Slow Roasted Turkey w/ Sage Dressing and Giblet Gravy
 Mahi Mahi with Papaya Salsa
 Pumpkin Ravioli
 Candied Sweet Potatoes
 Roasted Garlic Mashed Potatoes
 Honey Glazed Carrots and Green Beans

Dessert Station

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Aruba Airport Authority reports passenger growth for October 2009

4th consecutive month posting positive results



ORANJESTAD - Aruba Airport Authority N.V. (AAA) reports another strong Revenue Generating Passenger (RGP) performance month for October 2009 making this the fourth consecutive month with positive results. The continuous positive impact has also turned the negative spiral which peaked in year-to-date June 2009 results at -7.2% to an October 2009 year to date figure of -3.4%.

Further analysis of October 2009 figures indicates that the North American market grew by 3.8% Delta Airlines leading the way with an astounding 47.1% growth compared to October 2008 followed by Continental and jetBlue Airways with 16.1% and 11.0% growth percentages respectively. The Netherlands Antilles

recorded a -8.1% decrease the largest decrease compared to October 2008 with 19.4% compared to whilst Europe recorded October of the previous

year. Even though Arkefly and Martinair showed significant passenger growth year over year October with 15.8% and 265.9% respectively, Europe decreased with 19.4%, due to the absence of KLM and less traffic from the United Kingdom.

Latin America showed the largest passenger growth result by reaching a healthy 17.3% increase over October 2008.

The largest growth came from La Venezolana servicing Caracas and Maracaibo with a 69.9% RGP increase and the substantial growth from Copa Airlines which added

more seats by changed equipment from E190 to a B737-700 servicing Panama City four (4) times a week.

“We feel confident.” said Peter Steinmetz, Managing Director AAA, “These results further emphasize that our team’s efforts and actions to primarily maintain air service are making a positive difference. We continue to support the efforts of ATA and AHATA to ensure that demand for the destination remains strong hence translating in more occupied seats on each flight contributing to our overall success as a tourism destination”. □



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Café the Plaza's annual Golf Tournament is coming up



TIERRA DEL SOL - Golfers have been looking forward to it, but now the time is here: the Plaza Golf Open 2009 is here. Held on Saturday, November 28, this fun golf event will

see its shotgun start at 12.30 hrs. at the Tierra del Sol golf course. The format is a 2-men scramble and the expectation is that between 40 and 50 teams will register.

“This is a tournament without any big prizes, it is all about having fun,” tells Hans Nooter, avid golfer and co-owner of sponsor Café the Plaza in the Renaissance Marketplace. His brother Luuk is coming over from the Netherlands to play in the tournament. “When the KLM used to fly to Aruba, pursers and pilots used to request Aruba as their favorite destination, just to be able to play the tournament,” recalls Hans. “But that is not the case anymore, unfortunately.” After playing 18 holes, the tired golfers are expected at Café the Plaza for a reviving buffet and a few drinks. They can expect an excellent Indonesian bami goreng, complete with saté as well as



a salad bar before the prizes are handed out. The winners will get dinner or lunch

vouchers from Salt & Pepper, Café Rembrandt, Matthew's, Hadicurari and ChinoLatino. Prizes will be given out to the best three teams, for the Longest Drive and Closest to the Pin winners. □





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Dare To Play the Shark Game

Stellaris Casino Introduces Newest Slot Machine - Jaws Jackpot

PALM BEACH - Proud to be one of only six casino's in the entire Caribbean, Marriott's Stellaris Casino introduces its newest slot machine: the JAWS™ jackpot.

As of end October, casino guests can play this exciting slot machine at the largest casino on the island.

The Jaws jackpot machine features a total sensory experience, including incredible video graphics, state-of-the-art sound, and even a "shark tooth" spin button. The range of exclusive JAWS jackpot video slot games combine iconic JAWS music, film footage and symbols to deliver an action-packed and unforgettable player experience.

The game features the familiar spine-tingling Jaws theme music, which sets the tone to an excitement and entertainment moment. Casino guests have

to find the shark to gain points and bonuses. Players can bet up to 25 lines at this thrilling \$1ct bet machine and have a chance to win one of four link progressive jackpots and fun bonus games keep players in the "water" longer.

The 24 hour Stellaris Casino invites you to try your luck on the new Jaws slot machine or any of the other slots. Table games are open daily from 2pm to 4am.

Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino boasts 411 fully renovated guestrooms – the most spacious on the island – each with large, private balconies overlooking the sparkling waters of the Caribbean Sea.

On property, seven restaurants and cafes provide fare from light to elegant, while the largest casino in Aruba, a 6,500 square-foot spa, renewed free-form swimming pool with



cascading waterfalls and high-energy health club offer entertaining diversions.



Three parties to vie for parliament seats

PONDISLAND--The National Alliance (NA), Democratic Party (DP) and People's Progressive Alliance (PPA) will contest the January 22 elections for what is expected to be the last Parliament of the Netherlands Antilles. Parties will submit their slates of up to 11 candidates at the Civil Registry today, Nomination Day. NA leader Commissioner William Marlin is expected to head his party's slate, which is scheduled to be submitted at the Civil Registry at 3:00pm. Marlin has been quiet about the composition of his list. Island Councilmen and parliamentarians George Pantophlet and Rodolphe Samuel are expected to be on it. In the last parliamentary elections, NA captured two of the three seats allotted to St. Maarten. NA public relations officer Kendall Dupersoy called on all party supporters and members to dress in white and gather at Clem Labega Square at 2:45pm. From there, the gathering will accompany

party leaders to the Civil Registry for submission of the list of candidates. DP's list will be headed by party leader Island Councilwoman Sarah Wescot-Williams. However, she has also been tight-lipped about the composition of the party slate. It is expected that DP deputy leader parliamentarian Erno Labega and Island Councilman Roy Marlin will be candidates. Marlin called on party members and supporters to assemble in red at Cyrus Wathey Square from 2:00pm so the group can accompany the party leaders to the registry at 3:00pm. DP and NA will not need to have their slates endorsed by eligible voters to be able to contest the elections, because both parties are already represented in the Netherlands Antilles Parliament. However, PPA, led by former Island Councilwoman Gracita Arrindell, will need to secure the endorsement of 125 voters to be officially admitted to the parliamentary race. The party has never captured a

parliamentary seat. However, its leader and members are confident that the voters will give PPA a chance to represent St. Maarten. The PPA list will be headed by Arrindell, who served in the 2003-2007 Island Council. Like DP and NA, the party has kept a tight lid on who the other candidates on the slate are. According to party insiders, the candidates will be "new, fresh and very credible." Not likely to feature on any list is former DP member Island Councilman Theo

Heyliger who, after quitting the DP earlier this year and teaming up with the NA to form the Island Government, announced that he would be establishing his own political party. There had been some speculation that Heyliger, who has not yet publicly named his party, would team up with either the National Alliance or the PPA, but indications over the weekend were that he will not be testing the political waters in the upcoming elections.

Parties in Curaçao, Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba vying for seats in Parliament will also submit their slates to their Civil Registries today. The parliament elected on January 22 will take office in March and is not expected to sit a full four-year term. This parliament has to complete the dismantling of the Antilles so that new countries St. Maarten and Curaçao can emerge on 10-10-10. Election of the first parliaments of the two new countries should take place in July 2010. □

*** Human Hints Daily *** Helping Humanity

People tend to focus on what they want from life. We think we'll be happy as soon as our physical situations change. This is the old way of thought, based on separation. In the light of the new energies engulfing Humanity, the physical paradox becomes clear. In order to become truly empowered and genuinely abundant, we focus on how we can uniquely contribute to the whole. What unique gift do you have, that will reach out to Humanity with Compassion? Your reactions to your experiences have created this Unique Individual with a Unique Gift for Humanity. How can you connect with the Human Consciousness? How do you express yourself in such a way that your self-expression improves Humanity? When do you emit energy that balances the negative? What are you doing when time and all your other concerns disappear? There are an infinite number of ways to contribute. Stretch your mind and don't get stuck in society's stereotypes of service. When I talk about Service to Humanity, I do not necessarily mean volunteering. Giving selflessly propels you into Unity Consciousness, but only if you can afford to give away your time and energy. Don't give yourself away at your own expense. The time for martyrdom is over. No one said your time and energy are free. When you align with Service to the Greater Good, you will be aligned with abundance, and abundance will come to you naturally. Money is a common reference point for value throughout the world, and there is no reason you should not get value in return for offering your unique value to Humanity. Decide what unique value you provide to the Whole, then determine a monetary value that is fair to everyone involved. Check your competitor's prices, for a baseline reference point. The Human body is made up of billions of cells all acting together as a Unified Whole. As the Whole, the Body attacks the cells that

mean it harm, and empowers the helpful cells. People are cells that make up the Human Mass Consciousness. If you are aligned with helping the Whole, you will be aligned with the Synchronistic Flow of Life, and you will be empowered throughout your journey. If you are not aligned with your True Path, obstacles and pitfalls will plague your every effort. Learn to go with the flow, and stop fighting yourself. In Unity Consciousness, we realize that we are all One, which means that helping Humanity is helping ourselves. Find your unique gift to Humanity, something that contributes to the Whole, that you love so much, you lose yourself in it every time. Charge a fair price and spread your Unique Value into Humanity. Whatever definition of value you wish in return will be yours.

Until Tomorrow...

Go to www.HumanHints.com to sign up to receive this column in your email each day.

~Quentin Danziger

Quentin has over 20 years experience balancing what we refer to as the Real World, with science and spirit. He has held positions of responsibility and authority, received a Bachelor of Science in Engineering Physics from Colorado School of Mines, and has also studied many avenues of alternative thought. HumanHints is the culmination of his knowledge, experience and practice. These free daily emails detail concrete, real-world techniques to consciously create any future you choose, while in the throes of daily life created by outdated modes of thought.

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Experience Papillon's gripping story! Introducing a catching special for the early Birds

PALM BEACH – Henri Charrière, one of the world's most famous prisoners, would surely have had the time of his life at Papillon Restaurant in The Village, across from the Radisson Resort. Nicknamed Papillon because of the butterfly tattoo on his chest, the Frenchman was the first convict to escape from Devil's Island, something that nobody had ever done before. Charrière's thrilling, gripping...

auto-biography has been the concept behind Papillon Restaurant. The décor, the decorations and especially the restrooms wink at the thirteen terrible years Papillon spent in prison in French Guyana. Papillon restaurant's menu reflects the Frenchman's arduous journey to freedom: classic French dishes have been dusted with daring Caribbean flair and are a culinary journey for your taste buds. The spacious outside terrace is perfect for casual fine dining; the iron bars, flecks of rust and stains on the walls make one very glad not to be in Papillon's shoes in the 1940's! Charrière would undoubtedly have loved 'his' place on Aruba: this is luxury living for anyone!

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Papillon Restaurant is located in The Village, just across from the Radisson Resort.

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day with the Discover Scuba Dive Course, get PADI certified or join us on our daily one and two tank dives. Red Sail Sports is Aruba's lead-ing dive and watersports operator. Activity desks are located at the Hyatt Regency, Marriott Resorts and on Renaissance Island.

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At the Occidental Grand

Claudia & Scott celebrate love with marriage



The beautiful couple exchanged rings and vows during an intimate celebration on the beach with Rev. Robert Gibson and before their 5 young witnesses they call their own. Skylar, Saige, Chris, Joey



PALM BEACH – Claudia & Scott Marinoff celebrated their love for one another with a traditional white beach

blessing ceremony with their toes tucked in the sand at the Occidental Grand Resort on Palm Beach.

and the newest edition to the family still in a stroller all signed the official documents to confirm that what they



witnessed was true love's kiss and they pledge to live happily ever after as a family of 7. The wonderful ceremony was coordinated by Kimberley Ras-Dammerman, Wedding Coordinator of the Occidental Grand Aruba. As

a very unique treat for all, the Marinoffs invited an authentic Mariachi Band to join in the celebration.

Congratulations from Aruba Today and Bella Aruba Photography. □

~ Photos by Julia Renfro ~



SP wants action against tax-evading companies

THE HAGUE--Dutch Socialist Party (SP) Member of Parliament (MP) Ronald van Raak asked the Dutch Government on Saturday whether it was prepared to take measures against St. Maarten businesses that didn't pay taxes.

The MP posed questions after reports in the media that about half of businesses in St. Maarten didn't have a fiscal registration CRIB number and subsequently didn't pay taxes.

Van Raak asked Dutch State Secretary of Kingdom Relations Ank Bijleveld-Schouten whether she was aware that some 4,000 of the 7,500 companies registered at the St. Maarten Chamber

of Commerce didn't have a CRIB number.

The MP wanted to know in which sectors the companies were active and whether the businesses in question were "also involved in other forms of crime." He asked whether there was truth to reports that many companies doing business on the island were not even registered at the Chamber of Commerce, which would further add to the number of businesses that didn't pay taxes.

Van Raak asked Bijleveld-Schouten whether she was cognisant of the low tax-paying situation on the island and the fact that government wasn't doing enough to deal with this problem.

He asked how much tax revenue government was missing out on because of the reported low level of tax compliance. He also sought clarification on the amount the Netherlands was paying St. Maarten as part of the national debt pay-off.

The MP wanted to know to what extent low tax compliance would affect St. Maarten's capacity to attain country status in October next year, and what measures Bijleveld-Schouten would take to make sure that all companies paid taxes on the island.

"Are you prepared to take delay payment of these debts until companies comply with the tax laws?" he asked. □

Library kicks off annual Book Week

~ Themed 'Healthy Food' ~

PHILIPSBURG--Philipsburg Jubilee Library opened its annual Book Week on Sunday afternoon with a parade from the Government Administration Building to the library grounds. The festive opening included a fashion show, storytelling and much entertainment provided by various local youth drum bands.

The highlight of the opening, with the theme "Healthy Food" under the slogan "Books are food for the brain," was the unveiling of a symbolic food pyramid. The pyramid illustrated nutritious natural foodstuffs, ideal in the promotion of adapting a healthy lifestyle.

Shabba Djembre drum group provided the drum roll as the pyramid was unveiled. Prior to the unveiling, various primary school pupils paraded onstage modelling outfits designed in the shapes of a variety of fruits and vegetables.

Xhenji Wyatt read a short story. Drum band Generation New Status STM also free-styled, while Tzu Chi Foundation's dance group rounded off the afternoon's activities with a presentation.

In her opening remarks Library Director Monique Alberts said the library had organised Book Weeks for 25 years, perhaps even longer, and remained committed to making St. Maarten a reading nation.

She noted that her staff members were working diligently to ensure that local youngsters, apart from becoming good readers, became media literate. She said their goal in the long run was to assist the youth in becoming responsible citizens of Country St. Maarten.

Youth Affairs Commissioner Hyacinth Richardson, in his address, noted the significance of this year's Book Week, as the topic of health in the local community was prominent and so many individuals were suffering with health issues.

"We can only hope that by shaping the minds of our youngsters during events such as this one we will be able to observe a positive impact on the wellness of our society in the future," he commented. □

Balanced budget submitted, CFT agrees to refinancing

PHILIPSBURG--A balanced 2010 budget was submitted by the National Alliance (NA)/Heyliger government to the Committee for Financial Supervision CFT and the Central Committee last week after months of intense juggling to even out a NAf. 50 million deficit.

According to information gathered by this newspaper, the total budget is some NAf. 325.6 million. A condo fee expected to generate some NAf. 3 million is likely to be introduced while another NAf. 5 million is expected from the improved functioning of the tax department.

Government also anticipates, based on information gathered, that some NAf. 7.6 million would be generated through implementation of the Brooks Tower Accord which is expected to result in an increase in the number of employment permit applications.

Finance Commissioner Xavier Blackman said Saturday that the budget fits within the stringent rules being enforced by the CFT whose technocrats were involved in the budget preparation process.

Coming to a balanced budget took "diligent work" and a keen look at the Central Government budget, which reflected the fiscal planning of all five island territories. The Central Government submitted a balanced budget to CFT but did not take into account the ongoing dismantling, the commissioner said. The island government budget had done so, so adjustments were made to bring it in line with the Central Government budget.

Debate on the budget is set to start this week in the Central Committee with the aim of tabling it in the

Island Council for approval early December.

Millions for refinancing

Government has asked and received approval from CFT for refinancing some NAf. 24 million in outstanding loans. This will add about one million guilders annually to government's cash flow.

The commissioner did not go into details about which loans would be refinanced or what method would be used, preferring to wait until the 2010 budget was made public. He did disclose that the Central Bank had also given its nod of approval for the loan reworking.

Some revenue is also expected to aid the 2010 budget. The Central Government has to forward St. Maarten's share of the revenues for tasks that have to be decentralised by January 1, 2010.

Negotiations are ongoing to sort out the island's share of the Central Government funds that need to be transferred due to the dismantling process.

Blackman is confident that talks will be wrapped up ahead of that date, so the monies can be used to build up the needed infrastructure of country St. Maarten.

New guidelines

Blackman said that the Finance and related departments were working on a streamlined handling process for the budget to make future preparations more efficient and timely.

In the new country frameworks, each of the seven ministries will be responsible for putting together their budgets. The new budget handling method will ensure all ministries use the same formula. This

will make for easier balancing and a more timely presentation of the budget.

Development Funds

Reprioritising funds in the Social Economic Initiative (SEI) to create more budgetary support and flexibility was recently discussed with the Dutch Government in the biannual meeting on Development Funds by Commissioners William Marlin and Xavier Blackman in the Netherlands.

Government is responsible for providing a portion of the SEI funds for the list of social and economy-stimulating projects. Due to the weakening global economy and its effects on revenues and the lack of manpower to optimally prepare projects, a reassessment was requested to ensure that Dutch funds available were used in the allotted time and not taken back by the Netherlands.

Similarly, budgetary support from the European Union (EU) and other major organisations is being readressed to give the 2010 budget more sources of income so necessary projects are completed to the benefit of the people.

Technocrats from both sides of the ocean are reviewing the funds to come up with the best usage and ways to blend them into the budget.

Support is also expected from the Central Government. All ministries have submitted letters to the Executive Council outlining how they can help with setting up St. Maarten's seven ministries with available funding. Blackman said the local department directors were preparing responses to these letters for Executive Council's approval and dissemination. □

Xavier: Govt, private sector must tackle tax delinquency together

PHILIPSBURG--Now more than ever government and the private sector need to rev up their cooperation to ensure all businesses are tax compliant and thereby guard against only some businesses shouldering the tax burden, Finance Commissioner Xavier Blackman said Saturday. And, according to Blackman, another tax deficit that exists is businesses from the French side that provide goods and services on the Dutch side but do not pay any taxes on the Dutch side. This is a situation

that needs to be remedied and talks are already ongoing with the French side authorities to determine what can be done to regulate this situation.

The commissioner was asked by The Daily Herald about government's plans to tackle the approximately 4,000 businesses that are registered with the Chamber of Commerce but are without tax registration - CRIB numbers. He said the figure must first be verified by the chamber along with the Inspectorate of Taxes and the Island Receiver's

Office.

Chamber President Glen Carty had revealed the figure of delinquent businesses on Thursday and called on businesses to clean up their act.

"If it is the case that that number, [4,000], or a significant number of businesses are not registered as paying taxes then we have a serious problem on our hand. That figure has been bouncing around for sometime now, but it was not definite," Blackman said. He added that while the

figure came as a shock to many in the community, he had been aware of it when he was a chamber board member, before he became a commissioner in June.

He said the good cooperation that exists between government and the private sector must be increased to capture all delinquent tax payers because compliance needs to be managed in the tax regime that is being developed for country St. Maarten.

The taxes generated by businesses and residents

belong to "those same people. Government only collects it" and then uses it to provide services to the community in general. If there is disconnect between the money collected by government and the services that need to be provided, the entire community suffers, Blackman said.

Non-compliance with taxes is not a situation that is unique to St. Maarten. However, it must be tackled by all stakeholders "so no one is cheated or feels cheated," the commissioner said. □

Fair share

News that less than half of the active businesses registered at the St. Maarten Chamber of Commerce and Industry have so-called CRIB numbers (see Friday paper) was met with disbelief throughout society. If true, it would mean that out of the 7,500 companies involved, 4,000 do not pay taxes.

Granted, there has been talk for years that a considerable number of businesses on the island were not paying their fair share of taxes, but the reported magnitude of the problem is no less than shocking, as the chamber president himself called it. His pronounced intention to "compare notes" with the Inspectorate of Taxes comes none too soon.

As a matter of fact, one has to wonder why tax officials apparently have not used the chamber registry before to go after those failing to comply with not only their legal obligation, but also their civic and moral responsibility. After all, isn't part of the Inspectorate's task to enforce the fiscal legislation of the Netherlands Antilles?

The chamber's registry could be outdated to a certain extent and may include companies that are no longer in operation, although the report mentioned "active businesses." To what extent it may concern so-called off-shore firms is not clear either.

Another thing to take into account is the nature of the local tourism economy, which is characterised by a large so-called "informal" sector of individuals and small businesses providing services such as, for example, renting out beach chairs. Some of these might need the chamber registration to acquire certain permits, but might consider their earnings too small to pay tax.

On the other hand, there are probably also a number of individuals and small businesses economically active that are not in the chamber's registry at all and don't pay taxes either, which could make the problem even bigger. Until more details such as the size of the companies involved are available it is also difficult to estimate just how much this widespread tax evasion is costing the Island Territory, which receives all the direct taxes.

But it is in any case totally unacceptable that so many members of the local business community are not paying their share of taxes. While the Central Government is responsible for the levying of taxes and inspection, St. Maarten obviously has a vested interest in this matter, especially in light of the process to gain country status.

Certainly businesses and individuals that pay their taxes, but also the public in general deserve an explanation how this could happen and – more important – just what will be done immediately to remedy this unjust and highly frustrating situation. □

Teachers obtain degrees in distance learning programme

COLE BAY--Four Prins Willem Alexander School teachers stole the limelight Friday evening when they received their Bachelor's Degrees in Education from the Christelijke Hogeschool. Obtaining degrees during the ceremony held at Rock House Restaurant at Port de Plaisance were: Hedimalene Colli-Siem-A Joe, whose thesis dealt with how to improve writing in schools; Annette Dharamraj-Pawirooelomo, whose thesis addressed how to deal with overactive children in the classroom; Rosita Faerber, whose thesis focused on a joint approach for dealing with behavioural problems in school and Rinia J. Renfurm-Tampico, whose thesis concerned the philosophy of life and Christian Education.

Leader of Government and Education Commissioner William Marlin, Lt. Governor Franklyn Richards, and Head of the Insular Department of Education Quincy Harrigan were among the dignitaries in attendance.

Richards, who commended the graduates by name, recalled his own graduation some time ago and said he appreciated the lively ceremony being held for the graduates. He said too that the more prepared teachers were the more prepared students would be in St. Maarten's new status as Country (see related story).

Marlin congratulated the graduates on their accomplishments and praised Dick Hulstein and Albert van Dolderen of the Christelijke Hogeschool Ede (CHE) for providing the distance learning programme, which had enabled the teachers to upgrade their skills. He also said government would favourably consider reimbursing the teachers for paying out of pocket for their upgrading (see related story). Marlin thanked Foundation for Protestant Christian Education general director Asha Stevens for her role in coordinating the programme in St. Maarten, not only for her own teachers at Hillside Christian Schools, but for all teachers who wanted to improve their qualifications through the Distance Learning Programme.

Marlin said distance learning offered a wonderful opportunity for anyone who wished to further his/her education with less travel and less cost than traditional study methods.

Harrigan said he was pleased to see teachers upgrading their qualifications on their own

initiative. He went on to say that this was a very good move on their part, since the new education law required that teachers be properly qualified, and a lack of qualifications could greatly limit future opportunities for educators.

Stevens has been the prime mover of CHE's distance learning programme in St. Maarten. As an adjunct to her work as Windward Islands Foundation for Protestant Christian Education general director, Stevens has voluntarily worked with Christelijke Hogeschool for more than 11 years on various programmes, including placing student teachers from CHE at various schools in St. Maarten and arranging for local teachers to make working visits to CHE and other schools in the Netherlands. After extensive discussions with CHE leaders, she was able to coordinate the first CHE Distance Learning Programme in the Windward Islands in 2003. Since that time, 26 candidates have earned their Bachelor's Degrees and 14 candidates from various schools in St. Maarten are currently enrolled in the programme.

Dick Hulstein and Albert van Dolderen from Hogeschool, who administered the final exams, said they had especially enjoyed working with the teachers in St. Maarten and they appreciated the work of Stevens and her team, who had kept the programme here going over the past seven years.

On behalf of all the graduates and their families, colleagues and friends, Faerber thanked the Lord for His Guidance and expressed gratitude to Hulstein, Van Dolderen and Stevens for making the programme available to teachers in St. Maarten. She also thanked Rozella Lawrence and Elly Luscuere for providing guidance and advice to students in the programme.

Stevens thanked Lawrence and Luscuere, who had coached the graduates during their course work, and the graduates' principals, colleagues and family members for supporting the candidates, who she said had worked diligently for the course, in addition to performing their daily work in the classroom. She also thanked Principal Clara Curiel, an alumna of the CHE Bachelor's programme, who just this year completed her Master's degree through University of Phoenix, while continuing her full-time work at Hillside Christian Schools. □

BUSINESS

Aruba TODAY

Weak dollar, home sales data carry stocks higher

By **STEPHEN BERNARD**
and **SARA LEPRO**,
AP Business Writers

NEW YORK — Investors halted stocks' three-day losing streak Monday, buying across the market on a range of factors including the weaker dollar and better-than-expected home sales numbers.

Major stock indexes soared more than 1 percent in afternoon trading, including the Dow Jones industrials, which touched a new 13-month high.

The National Association of Realtors' report showing a big jump in October home sales revived investors' optimism after disappointing data on the housing industry last week raised concerns about the strength of the economic recovery.

Another drop in the dollar pushed prices for gold, oil and other commodities higher, boosting energy and material stocks.

A weaker dollar makes commodities cheaper for foreign buyers, and in turn lifts profits for the companies that produce them.

Bond prices retreated as investors regained their appetite for risk.

The dollar slumped after James Bullard, president of the Federal Reserve Bank in St. Louis, said the central bank should continue to buy mortgage-backed securities after the program is supposed to expire in March. That would continue to keep interest rates low.

Low interest rates and a resulting decline in the dollar have been big drivers behind the stock market's eight-month rally. Low interest rates enable investors to borrow cheaply and buy assets like stocks and commodities that have the potential to earn higher yields than cash.

Investors were buying Monday on somewhat contradictory

forces in the market.

The strength in housing is a sign of an improving economy, which could argue in favor of raising rates, while the dollar's weakness points to rates remaining low.

Analysts say investors who still have plenty of available cash are primed to buy, and so the market is rising on its own momentum.

"There's still \$2 trillion of cash that needs to find its way into the stock market," said Phil Orlando, chief equity market strategist at Federated

Investors.

Orlando said investors will continue to look for dips in the rally as a way to get into the market, not wanting to end the year without participating in some of the big gains stocks have made.

"Bearish managers are sweating bullets that they're not going to be able to get that cash in the market and they need to do that," he said. "That is why any pullback we've seen this year has been met with a wave of cash that has pushed stocks up higher." □



In this Nov. 17, 2009 photo, A 'sold' sign is seen outside a home in Los Angeles. October home sales are up 10.1 percent, beating expectations, as tax credit spurs sales.

(AP Photo/Reed Saxon)

By **ALAN ZIBEL**,
AP Real Estate Writer

WASHINGTON — First-time buyers seized on a tax credit, combined with low mortgage rates and falling prices, to boost home sales in October to their highest level in 2 1/2 years.

Home sales are now nearly 37 percent above their bottom in January, though still 16 percent below their peak in 2005. At the current sales pace, there's a modest seven-month supply for sale. Bidding wars are occurring in some areas.

Analysts, though, said the gains mainly reflected the homebuyer tax credit, which had been due to expire on Nov. 30. Earlier this month, Congress voted to extend it until spring — and expanded it to more buyers.

The report Monday from the National Association of Realtors pleased investors on Wall Street. Analysts said the homebuyer tax credit will help sustain the housing market next year.

Yet the overall economy is likely to benefit only slightly from higher home sales.

Too many factors are weighing on the fledgling recovery. Home construction is weak. Foreclosures are rising. Job creation is slow. And consumers remain reluctant to spend.

Though housing is contributing to growth, other parts of the economy must turn around if the recovery is to gain strength,



In this Nov. 19, 2009 photo, Traders work on the floor at the New York Stock Exchange in New York.

(AP Photo/Seth Wenig)

October sales gains lift hopes for housing market

analysts said.

Residential spending has gone from being a drag on the overall economy to a positive force, but "I wouldn't want to bet the house on housing, really, in terms of the strength of the U.S. economy going forward," said Diane Swonk, chief economist at Mesirow Financial in Chicago.

The Realtors group said resales rose 10.1 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 6.1 million in October, from a downwardly revised pace of 5.54 million in September. It was the biggest monthly increase in a decade, and far above the 5.65 million pace economists expected, according to Thomson Reuters.

"People who are looking, they are serious," said Harrison Tulloss, an agent with ZipRealty Inc. in the Raleigh-Durham area of North Carolina. "They're not riding around with me if they need to go shopping or buy a turkey."

Investors seized on the better-than-expected home sales, along with a falling dollar, to snap up stocks. The Dow Jones industrial average and other stock indexes rose more than 1 percent in mid-afternoon trading.

The strength in home sales helped ease the market's pessimism that followed weaker data on housing starts, employment and consumer confidence over the past few weeks. The falling dollar contributed to the rally, on the expectation that a low dollar will keep interest rates low. Low rates make it cheaper for companies to borrow and investors to finance purchases of stocks and commodities.

Stocks also were helped by momentum buying, with investors buying stocks simply because the market is rising and no one wants to miss out on the rally.

The recovery in the housing market is being driven by reduced prices, combined with federal programs to lower mortgage rates and bring more buyers into the market. The median sales price was \$173,100. That's down 7 percent from a year earlier and off roughly 2 percent from September.

Many experts, though, predict prices will hit a new low next spring, perhaps falling another 5 to 10 percent, as more foreclosures get pushed onto the market. □

Michael Jackson wins 4 at AMAs; Swift top artist



Jermaine Jackson accepts the award for best soul R&B favorite male artist on behalf of his late brother Michael Jackson at the 37th Annual American Music Awards on Sunday, Nov. 22, 2009, in Los Angeles.

(AP Photo/Matt Sayles)

By SANDY COHEN,
AP Entertainment Writer
LOS ANGELES – The King of Pop is still winning awards and setting records doing it. But while Michael Jackson won a record four posthumous awards, he couldn't beat Taylor Swift for top honors at Sunday night's American Music Awards.

The 19-year-old was named the year's favorite artist, giving Jackson his only loss of the night, and giving her five trophies in all.

"Music has never been ultimately about competition," she said as she accepted the top prize via satellite from London, where she is to perform Monday. "To even be mentioned in a category with Michael Jackson, who we will miss and love forever, is an unimaginable honor."

The victories came during a performance-filled show that closed with an S&M-themed, sexually charged performance by Adam Lambert.

Swift was also named favorite female pop/rock and country artist and favorite adult-contemporary artist. Her album, "Fearless," won favorite country album. Jackson was voted favorite male artist in

the pop/rock and soul/R&B categories. His 2003 greatest-hits album, "Number Ones," also won favorite album in both categories, bringing his career AMA total to 23, making him the most honored artist in AMA history.

Jackson's victories were among the highlights of the evening, which also featured an eye-popping performance by Lady Gaga, a special award for Whitney Houston and that jaw-dropping number from Lambert, who traded in his "American Idol" image for sex, leather and chains Sunday.

On an elaborate set filled with stairs and platforms, Lambert fondled a female dancer, kissed an androgynous band mate and led two leather-clad men across the stage on leashes as he sang the title track from his new CD, "For Your Entertainment," out this week.

Lady Gaga, wearing a "Alien"-inspired headdress and vest filled with lights, performed songs from her new album, "The Fame Monster," also due in stores this week. She used her microphone to break into a glass case where a grand piano stood. It caught fire when she

sat down to play.

Whitney Houston made a resplendent return to the AMA stage with an elegant performance of "I Didn't Know My Own Strength." The 46-year-old entertainer also received the International Award of Excellence for her musical and philanthropic contributions. She dedicated the honor to her daughter, music mogul Clive Davis and "everybody who supported me."

Jackson's trophies were accepted by his brother Jermaine, who paid tribute to his late brother by wearing glittery white glove. He thanked "Allah for blessing my entire family" and named each of his brothers and sisters.

He said the message of Michael, who died in June at age 50, is more important than any award.

"The message that Michael had will live on forever," he said. "He saw good in everyone and he wanted everyone to do good. He always started with love."

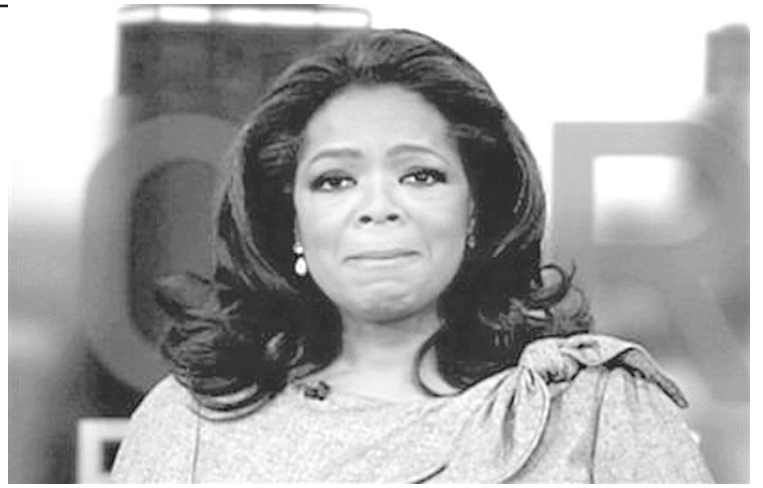
The American Music Awards honor the year's top-selling artists in eight popular genres, and fans voted for the winners online. But even more than awards, the AMAs are about performances, and more than a dozen of them filled Sunday's show.

The Black Eyed Peas, voted favorite pop/rock band, energized the crowd when they performed two of the year's most popular hits: "I Got A Feeling" and "Boom Boom Pow."

Rihanna returned to the AMA stage, sporting blonde hair, a skintight, white peek-a-boo bodysuit and a tattoo down the front of her neck that read "Rated R," the name of her new album, out this week.

Janet Jackson opened the show with a medley of some of the biggest hits from her long career — all tracks that appear on her new greatest-hits collection, also called "Number Ones."

Alicia Keys and Jay-Z dueted on their ode to New York City. Shakira was flanked by a dozen dancers in tiny black bodysuits as she sang her new single. □



In this image taken from video Friday, Nov. 20, 2009 and provided by Harpo Productions Inc., talk-show host Oprah Winfrey announces during a live broadcast of 'The Oprah Winfrey Show' in Chicago that her daytime television show, the foundation of a multibillion-dollar media empire, will end its run in 2011 after 25 seasons on the air.

(AP Photo/Harpo Productions, Inc.)

To millions, Oprah's not a megastar, just a BFF

By JOCELYN NOVECK,

AP National Writer

NEW YORK – Like any wife who knows her husband well, Nancy Martus knows what will annoy her man. Like when she utters the phrase, "Oprah says..."

"He doesn't like it when I start my sentences that way," laughs Martus, a 36-year-old mother of three in Plymouth, Mass. "He says he doesn't care what Oprah says."

Good luck with that, Mr. Martus.

For his wife and for millions of women around the country, Winfrey has become, over the years, much more than a regular television date. Talk to her fans, and you hear a familiar refrain: Oprah's like a favorite aunt, a sister, or a friend. Forget the sprawling media empire and the billions that separate her daily existence from that of ordinary folks. To these fans, she still feels like a BFF.

That connection, especially remarkable for how long it's lasted, is one reason why you can sense tangible disappointment but hardly anger among die-hard fans that she's ending her talk show — well, in a year and a half — and moving to unspecified ventures in cable. Because, many of these women say, you support your friends, even when they're moving away and you're mad at them for leaving. You have to be happy for them.

"You know, we're selfish to miss her," says Tracy Arenibar, a 37-year-old fan in Homer Glen, Ill. "I'm proud of her because she's making a decision that she's earned. She deserves it."

Just how has Winfrey managed to maintain such a connection with viewers over nearly a quarter-century? Certainly, ratings have declined over the last decade — one reason, some speculate, that she decided to end her show and take a gamble with her new network, OWN (The Oprah Winfrey Network).

But still, Winfrey's bringing in an average of 7.2 million viewers this season, a number that dwarfs the audience of, for example, the highly likable Ellen DeGeneres, whom some see as a likely successor at the top of the talk-show ladder.

To Joy Behar, the comedian and fellow talk show host, Winfrey's gift is an ability to make everyone feel like she cares — not just about humanity, but about them.

"You're home, you're depressed, and you have the feeling that she really gives a damn," says Behar, who co-hosts "The View" and recently launched her own show on HLN. "She gives the impression that she knows you personally."

By contrast, the iconic Johnny Carson, who hosted "The Tonight Show" for 30 years, was cool as a cucumber — witty, amusing, comforting. "But you wouldn't necessarily want him to come for Thanksgiving dinner," Behar noted in a telephone interview. □

The Sunset Grille is Aruba's premier traditional steakhouse!



Palm Beach – The Sunset Grille at the Radisson Aruba Resort Casino & Spa needs no introduction. The award winning American steakhouse with its chic, cosmopolitan atmosphere headlines Prime Beef, the highest grade USDA -- only 2% of all beef is graded prime, required to age a minimum of 4 weeks. The restaurant also features Certified Angus Beef, specialty selected highly marbled USDA and premium never-frozen seafood. While steaks and chops make

up the heart of the menu, the resort's Executive Chef Hector Espinoza and restaurant Chef Johnny Farro innovated unparalleled appetizers and extraordinary desserts, which helped the Sunset Grille achieve AAA's elite four-diamond status – a rare feat for steakhouses. Chef Farro is now the dedicated restaurant chef, delivering over 20 years of restaurant experience to the already legendary culinary team. When asked to suggest a

perfect dinner combination, Chef Farro does not hesitate and order the Chop House Martini Salad, with Romaine Lettuce, Hearts of Palm, Sliced Egg, Tomatoes, Blue Cheese, Bacon, Sweet Pepper and creamy Chopin Vodka dressing, served “Shaken not Stirred,” the Lobster Bisque baked with a Crispy Pastry Crust and flavored with a touch of cognac, and the popular Rack of Lamb featuring Four Double Cut Chops, with Mint Pesto, Roasted Tomatoes and Onion Confit.



The latest restaurant's menu revision included the introduction of some interesting dishes such as Tuna Tataki, Sesame Rice Cracker crusted Tuna served rare with Thai Chili and Ginger; Roasted Loin Veal Chop, Apple Chutney, Maple Balsamic Glaze with a Garlic & Spinach Custard and Asia Style Salmon & Scallops, escorted by wakame salad and served over soba noodles. The Sunset Grille always endeavors to exceed guests' expectations by purchasing the very best products available and

preparing them in accordance with a combination of “tried and true” as well as cutting edge contemporary methods, Espinoza explains. Simply put, the Sunset Grille culinary team buys the best products, and cooks them the best way they know, refusing to cut corners, especially when it comes to buying, aging and cutting meat. No wonder the readers of Caribbean Travel & Life named it the top restaurant in the Caribbean. Open for dinner from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. every night, indoor and outdoor seating. □



Palm beach – The Lazy Lizard in a one stop shop before you hit the waves. Designed to stimulate your shopping instincts, the beautiful store is hard to resist. What you'll

Life's a beach at the Lazy Lizard



find at the new South Beach Centre on Palm Beach, just a few steps away from the Hard Rock Café, is absolutely gorgeous: hand picked gifts,

souvenirs, beach and resort wear, for women, men and kids. It's all on display from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day. The tastefully arranged store is

signature Jodi Tobman-Hagedoorn, the Boston-born retailer at the helm of Salamander Holdings family of fun stores, The Juggling Fish, The Coconut Trading Co., T.H. Palm & Company & The Lazy Lizard. You will find a great selection of children's gifts here. In fact an entire store section is dedicated to gifts with a tropical appeal for babies and toddlers, among them whimsical plush stuffed iguanas, parrots and seahorses. Moreover, a bonanza of fridge magnets, hand-made silver jewelry, batik beach



wraps, throws, bags and hats awaits you. Tel.: 586 6206. For more information you may write to: orders@salamanderholdings.com □



Murky ocean depths hide abundance of life



A handout photo from the Census of Marine Life shows a "bush" of a tube worm in the Gulf of Mexico. Thousands of animal species thrive in the ocean depths beyond the reach of sunlight, between 200 to 5,000 meters below the surface, an international team of scientists has reported after nearly 10 years of research.

(AFP/HO/File/CENSUS OF MARINE LIFE)

by Jean-Louis Santini

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Thousands of animal species thrive in the ocean depths beyond the reach of sunlight, between 200 to 5,000 meters below the surface, an international team of scientists has reported after nearly 10 years of research.

More than 2,000 scientists from 80 countries are taking part in the first global Census of Marine Life project scheduled to be completed in October of next year.

Using deep-towed cameras, sonar and other state-of-the-art technologies, the teams since 2000 have inventoried 17,650

species of marine species, ranging from crabs to shrimp to worms, living below 200 meters, the penetration limit for the sun's rays.

The majority of the deep sea creatures live on animal droppings from the sunlight layer above, while others have adapted to diets of bacteria that break down oil, sulfur and methane, the sunken bones of dead whales and other foods. Edward Vanden Berghe, who manages the Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS), the Census' inventory of marine life observations, said that, unsurprisingly, the number of species falls off dramatically at deeper depths.

Nevertheless, he added, OBIS researchers have recorded 5,722 species living at a depth of more than 1,000 meters (yards).

The scientists -- 344 from 34 countries are directly involved in the deep-sea inventory project -- said their work has shed light on the abundance,

diversity and distribution of animals in marine depths that were thought to be barren.

"Abundance is mostly a function of available food and decreases rapidly with depth," said Robert Carney of Louisiana State University, co-leader along with Myriam Sibuet of France of the Census project studying life along the world's continental margins.

"The continental margins are where we find the transition from abundant food made by photosynthesis to darkened poverty," Carney added.

He said it was difficult to understand why there was so much diversity since the silt covering the ocean bottom appears uniformly bereft of nutrients.

"The transitions display the intriguing adaptations and survival strategies of amazing species," said the scientist.

The most surprising creatures discovered include a "bizarre, elongated orange animal identified as *Neocyema*" living at 2,000 to 2,500 meters

in depth. It was only the fifth specimen ever caught and the first found on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, researchers said.

At 1,000 to 3,000 meters researchers collected a very large specimen of a rare, primitive animal known as cirrate or finned octopod, commonly called "Dumbos" because they flap a pair of large ear-like fins to swim, akin to the cartoon flying elephant.

The jumbo Dumbo netted by Census explorers was estimated to be nearly two meters (6.5 feet) long and, at six kilograms (13 pounds), the largest of only a few specimens of the species ever obtained.

By the time the 10-year Census concludes in October, 2010, its five deep-sea projects will have collectively fielded more than 210 expeditions. The final Census report is to be released in London on October 4, 2010.

Census of Marine Life can be accessed at www.coml.org. □

Catch your own dinner with Driftwood! Motto at Driftwood Restaurant: "From the pier to your plate!"

ORANJESTAD - The downtown marina is home of Driftwood Fishing Charters, the successful fishermen of the established seafood restaurant Driftwood in Oranjestad.

Driftwood owner Herby Merryweather has a love and passion for fishing. A fisherman who knows about fish, what our local waters have to offer, and what the words



"fresh seafood" really mean. What Herby catches will be served in his restaurant on

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Shoppers prepare to load their car with purchases from a Kmart store in Somerville, Mass. Thursday, Nov. 19, 2009. Americans are feeling more stress from debt these days, raising the odds they'll act like Scrooge rather than Santa during the holiday shopping season.

Associated Press

AP Poll: Debt stress turns shoppers into Scrooges

By JEANNINE AVERSA,
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — A lot more Americans are feeling stressed out by debt this holiday season, raising the glum likelihood they'll behave like Scrooge rather than Santa. In fact, fully 93 percent say they'll spend less or about the same as last year, according to an Associated Press-GfK poll. About 20 percent say they are suffering from debt-related stress, up from 15 percent in the spring despite all the talk about economic recovery. Most people — 80 percent — say they'll use mostly

cash to pay for their holiday shopping, and that generally means buying less.

For example, Joy McGavin, 26, of Pittston, Pa., says she will cut back on holiday gifts by a few hundred dollars this year and pay for everything with cash. "Family — nieces and nephews — we won't be able to afford this year," says the stay-at-home mother of three. They now shop at Big Lots — not Wal-Mart. "They're too expensive this year," she says.

Her husband, Robert, had been working two-full time jobs, as a mechanic at a garage and at an auto parts store. Recently his retail job was cut back to part time. "We don't have as much as we had last year," McGavin laments. They don't have health insurance and have racked up major medical bills.

Diane Morrison, 57, of Flemington, N.J., says simply, "I'm going to cut back." She's clipping coupons and "looking for big sales."

She owns a payroll company, and many of her clients are laying off workers. Some of the companies are folding, she says, and "I'm feeling more stressed because I feel my income will go down because of what's happening with my business."

Morrison and the McGavins are hardly alone with job problems. Unemployment has rocketed past 10 percent for only the second time since World War II, making it harder to pay monthly bills. Home foreclosures have spiked to record highs, and defaults on credit card debt are rising. What does that mean for retailers in their most-important season?

Continued on Next Page

Program to help truckers attracts drug smugglers



A freight truck, right, breezes through a congested border check point using a Free and Secure Trade Lane, or FAST Lane, in Laredo, Texas, Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2009. The FAST Lane is part of the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism, or C-TPAT.

Associated Press

CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN,
Associated Press Writer

LAREDO, Texas (AP) — A U.S. program that offers trusted trucking companies speedy passage across American borders has begun attracting just the sort of customers who place a premium on avoiding inspections: Mexican drug smugglers. Most trucks enrolled in the program pause at the border for just 20 seconds before entering the United States. And nine out of 10 of them do so without anyone looking at their cargo.

Continued on Page B3



U.S. Army Spc. Travis Heslet from Carrollton, Texas, belonging to Alpha troop of the 3-71 Cavalry squadron guards a position with fellow soldiers near the town of Baraki Barak, Logar province, Afghanistan, Monday, Nov. 23, 2009.

Associated Press

Bombings, shooting kill 12 around Afghanistan

ELENA BECATOROS,
Associated Press Writer

KABUL (AP) — Bombings and shootings killed 12 people across Afghanistan, including four American troops and three children, as President Barack Obama convened his war council again Monday to fine-tune a strategy to respond to the intransigent violence.

Continued on Page B6



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In this Dec. 23, 2008 file photo, two women head for the subway with their purchases after shopping in New York with one day remaining in the holiday shopping season.

Associated Press

DEBT STRESS

Continued from Page B1

“Cash serves as a very direct governing force upon spending,” says Dr. Alan Hilfer, director of psychology at Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, N.Y. “If you have \$100 in your pocket,

and that’s all you can spend, you’ll look around and make a decision based on the amount of money you have.” Credit cards, on the other hand, allow people to make more impulse purchases.

In the survey, people who intend to spend less during

the holidays reported suffering from higher debt stress than those who plan to spend the same or more, said Paul J. Lavrakas, a research psychologist and AP consultant who analyzed the results.

Those who plan to use cash to pay for most of their holiday season purchases have higher stress levels, he said. So do those who will carry over at least some of their holiday season credit card charges because they won’t be able to pay the bill in full when it arrives.

Hilfer said that when debt increases and becomes a focus of anxiety, it forces people to start thinking more long term. “They won’t allow impulse buying and won’t splurge as much because they are thinking that next year they may need to have the money to fix the motor on the washing machine, so they can’t spend that money now,” he said.

How consumers behave during the holidays and beyond is a critical force determining how

strongly the economy snaps back from the worst recession since the 1930s. Consumer spending is the single-largest driver of overall economic activity.

The traditional kickoff of the holiday sales season is Friday — the day after Thanksgiving.

This time of year is crucial for merchants, accounting for up to 40 percent of their annual sales. The National Retail Federation believes holiday sales will decline this year, but the drop won’t be as steep as last year when the country was deep in recession.

Looking into next year, consumers won’t be in much of a mood to go on a shopping spree because of high unemployment and hard-to-get credit, according to the National Association for Business Economics. Consumer spending will rise a lackluster 2 percent next year, one of the forces restraining the strength of the recovery, NABE forecasters said. Such

spending fell 0.2 percent in 2008. Unemployment now at 10.2 percent, will average 9.8 percent next year, they said.

For people who do plan to charge their holiday purchases, 75 percent say they’ll pay off the charges in full when the bill arrives. Twenty-five percent say they’ll carry some of the charges over into the next month.

The average amount owed on credit cards is \$5,600, the poll said. That’s up from \$4,900 in the spring.

More broadly, people carry an average of about \$46,000 in debt — mortgages, credit cards, auto loans and other consumer debt. That’s a far bigger load than in the early 1980s when the jobless rate last topped 10 percent. In 1982 per capita debt totaled about \$14,000 in today’s dollars.

The AP-GfK poll involved interviews with 1,006 adults and was conducted Nov. 5-9. The margin of sampling error was plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. □

Charges unsealed in missing Somalis terror probe

PATRICK CONDON

Associated Press Writer

MINNEAPOLIS

(AP)

— Promising both “true brotherhood” and “fun,” several Somali men convinced fellow immigrants in Minneapolis to return to their East African homeland and take up arms with a terrorist group, according to federal charges unsealed Monday against eight individuals.

The charges are part of an unfolding federal investigation into the disappearance of as many as 20 young Somali men from Minneapolis over the last two years — most of them U.S. citizens who federal authorities say are guilty of terrorism. Federal prosecutors say most of the men traveled to Somalia to join the terror group al-Shabab, which the U.S. State Department says has links to al-Qaeda.

Ralph S. Boelter, the special agent in charge of the FBI’s Minneapolis field office, called the latest round of indictments a “tipping point” in the more than yearlong investigation. “We have reached momentum, and reached a point where we will have full resolution of this

case,” Boelter said at a news conference with Minnesota’s U.S. Attorney, B. Todd Jones. Fourteen people have been charged in the investigation. The eight charged Monday are accused of a mix of recruiting and raising funds for the trips, and of engaging in terrorist acts in civil war-torn Somalia. Indictments say some attended terrorist training camps where they received instruction in firing small arms and machine guns, military style tactics and indoctrination in “anti-Ethiopian, anti-American, anti-Israel, and anti-Western beliefs,” according to a federal affidavit.

Two of those charged Monday helped raise money for the trips by approaching unknowing members of Minnesota’s Somali community and soliciting funds by telling them it was to pay for trips for young Somali men to travel to Saudi Arabia and study the Koran, according to the affidavit.

Boelter and Jones said one reason they disclosed new details about the case was to reassure members of Minnesota’s Somali

community that the investigation is focused on a relatively small group of individuals. The larger community “has consistently expressed deep concern about this pattern of recruitment activity,” Jones said.

Still, the federal officials declined to say whether any of the new indictments targeted alleged leaders or masterminds of the recruitment scheme. The investigation is ongoing, they said, and there could be more indictments and arrests. Federal officials declined to name a local mosque which court documents allege was a site for some recruiting and planning.

Of the 14 people indicted, four have pleaded guilty and are awaiting sentencing. Seven are not in custody and are believed to be outside the United States.

Boelter said he did not think that Minnesota Somalis are still being recruited, but he could not say for sure. “I’m confident it’s not happening, but you’re never 100 percent sure there’s no activity,” he said.

FBI Director Robert Mueller



FBI Special Agent in Charge Ralph Boelter answers questions during a news conference, Monday, Nov. 23, 2009, in Minneapolis, about newly unsealed charges against eight defendant related to involvement with extremist groups in Somalia. U.S. Attorney for Minnesota B. Todd Jones looks on at right.

Associated Press

has said the case is worrisome because it shows young men raised in the United States can be recruited by terrorists overseas, trained to conduct attacks and in some cases killed in the fighting there.

One of the men who left Minneapolis, Shirwa Ahmed, allegedly carried out a suicide bombing in Somalia’s Puntland region in October 2008. New charges unsealed Monday said Ahmed was

also among a group of al-Shabab fighters who launched an armed ambush against Ethiopian troops.

Boelter said he had “no indication” that any of the Somali men ever intended to engage in a terrorist attack in the United States. “But the national security implications are evident — Americans with U.S. passports attending foreign terror camps,” he said. □

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DRUG SMUGGLERS

Continued from Page B1

But among the small fraction of trucks that are inspected, authorities have found multiple loads of contraband, including eight tons of marijuana seized during one week in April. Some experts now question whether the program makes sense in an environment where drug traffickers are willing to do almost anything to smuggle their shipments into the U.S.

The trusted-shipper system "just tells the bad guys who to target," said Dave McIntyre, former director of the Integrative Center for Homeland Security at Texas A&M University.

The program works like this: Participating companies agree to adopt certain security measures in exchange for fast entry into the U.S. They are required to put their employees through background checks, fence in their facilities and track their trucks. They also are asked to work with subcontractors who also have been certified under the program, which is run by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency.

The government keeps the list of participants secret, citing national security and trade secrets. But some of the 9,500 companies who are part of the system advertise their membership to drum up business, making them targets for smugglers, who can then threaten drivers or offer them bribes.

More than half of all U.S. imports now come from companies in the program, called the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism, or C-TPAT. Mexican trucking companies make up only 6 percent of global membership in the system, but they account for half of its 71 security violations during the past two years.

Mexican trucking companies face higher scrutiny than others. They get a full customs inspection every year, instead of every three years like other

participating companies.

The most common contraband is marijuana, officials say.

In a 24-hour period in April, customs officers in Laredo found three tons of marijuana in trucks carrying auto parts across two different bridges. Five days after that, agents in El Paso, Texas, found more than four tons of marijuana in a tractor-trailer hauling auto parts.

In July, the director of the program became alarmed by the number of large drug seizures along the border and issued a security bulletin asking participating companies to redouble their efforts against smuggling.

Stephen Flynn, senior fellow for Counterterrorism and National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, said truckers do not feel safe rejecting bribes, no matter what agreements their companies have made with the U.S. government.

"The basic vulnerability for a truck driver remains the 'plata-or-plomo' dilemma," Flynn said, using Spanish shorthand for taking a bribe or a bullet. John Chaffin, a trade lawyer near San Diego, said he had worked with one Mexican trucking company that wanted to join the program, but then pulled out. He suspects participating companies feel

pressure from drug gangs to help them smuggle drugs into the United States.

"Some Mexican truckers have figured out, 'I don't want someone thinking I'm a better target than someone else,'" Chaffin said.

Mexican authorities suspect a man who owned a participating trucking company in Aguascalientes, Mexico, was killed by drug gangs in July 2008. The slaying of Gerardo Medrano Ibarra is unsolved.

Roberto Ramirez de la Parra, then chief of operations for Mexico's customs agency, told El Norte newspaper that exporters last year became worried that organized crime was targeting U.S.-certified companies.

In the past, smugglers created their own fly-by-night businesses for smuggling, he said. Now they use major trucking corporations.

In Laredo, the border's busiest crossing, nearly 700 trucks a day pass through the lane at the World Trade Bridge reserved for trucks that are certified by the trusted-carrier program, each one pausing only for a matter of seconds.

Trucking companies have to electronically submit a list of each vehicle's cargo to customs officials at least 30 minutes before arriving at the bridge. Customs agents review



Custom and Border Protection Port Director Gene Garza talks about the Free and Secure Trade Lane, or FAST Lane in Laredo, Texas, Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2009.

Associated Press

them for risk factors that could trigger an inspection. Customs will not reveal those factors, but people familiar with the program say potential risks are judged based on the factory that is sending the goods, its location, the truck's route and other matters.

Required cable locks on the trailer doors are also checked, but smugglers have been known to cut them and carefully glue them back together or take the trailer doors off at the hinges without disturbing the locks. Mexican trucking company owner Leonardo Varela Resendez joined the program because he did not want to lose clients. At first glance, Autotransportes Varela Davila,

a family trucking business with 54 tractor-trailers in Reynosa, Mexico, seemed the sort of low-tech operation smugglers would target. Then Varela pointed out the security cameras surrounding the yard, the guard at the front gate who took down a visitor's license plate number and the woman who tracks his trucks' whereabouts by computer.

"I have learned good things from the U.S. like this, and we understand it benefits companies and the U.S. too," Varela said. Nearby Varela is building a new yard for his trucks. It is larger, modern and will include 128 mounted security cameras, as well as an infirmary for giving drug tests to drivers. □

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Schumer says failure not an option on health care



In this photo provided by CBS, Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., appears on CBS's "Face the Nation" in Washington, Sunday, Nov. 22, 2009.

By **RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR**

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Failure is not an option on health care, a leading Democratic senator said Monday, even as Republicans turned up the heat on moderates who hold the fate of the legislation in their hands.

"We're not going to not pass a bill," said Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y. With or without Republican support, Democrats will get it done, Schumer said, because a

health care system that leaves nearly 50 million uninsured and spends more than any other is clearly broken.

Republicans wasted no time Monday going after Democratic moderates who delivered a Senate victory Saturday for President Barack Obama. The 60-39 vote overcame a procedural hurdle and allowed floor debate to start after Thanksgiving. Senate Democrats hope to finish their bill by Christmas, but it remains to be seen whether Obama gets final

health care legislation this year.

A state Republican Party leader accused Sen. Ben Nelson, D-Neb., of trying to have it both ways by talking conservative back home and voting with liberals in Washington.

"Nebraskans are finally wising up that there are two Ben Nelsons," said Nebraska GOP Chairman Mark Fahleson. "There's the Washington Ben Nelson ... who gave Democrats the vote they wanted. Then there's the Nebraska Ben Nelson ... who comes back here to Nebraska and tries to portray himself as a conservative."

Nelson's office had no response, but the Democrat has said he won't vote for a final bill unless it takes into account his concerns about limits on abortion funding, as well as his opposition to a new government-run insurance plan.

Another moderate Democrat, Sen. Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, said Monday she also could not support "a government-run, government-funded" public plan. With hundreds of thousands of

uninsured people in her state eligible for existing government programs such as Medicaid, getting them signed up should be the first priority. Democrats hope to persuade at least one Republican, Maine Sen. Olympia Snowe, to vote for the final bill. But Snowe voted with Republicans on Saturday to block Majority Leader Harry Reid's 10-year, \$979 billion bill from coming to the floor.

Reid, D-Nev., will have to resolve differences within his party over abortion, taxes and letting the government sell health insurance as a competitor with private insurers. Another 60-vote test awaits him at the end of the debate, weeks from now. The House has already passed its version.

Both bills would require all Americans to carry health insurance, with government help to make premiums more affordable. They would ban insurance companies from denying coverage or charging more to people with health problems. They would set up new insurance markets for those who now have the hardest time finding and keeping coverage — self-employed people and small businesses. Americans insured through big employer plans would gain new consumer protections but wouldn't face major changes. Seniors would get better prescription coverage.

They differ on abortion, taxes and the public plan.

If Democrats succeed in passing their legislation, it may leave consumers feeling a little cheated. Even after a phase-in of several years, the Democratic measures would leave 12 million or more eligible Americans uninsured. Many middle-class families who'd be required to buy coverage would still find the premiums a stretch, even with government aid. A new federal fund to provide temporary coverage for people with health problems would quickly run out of cash.

On abortion funding, the House adopted strict limitations as the price for getting anti-abortion Democrats to vote for the final

bill. Abortion rights supporters are backing Reid's approach in the Senate bill, which tries to preserve coverage for abortion while stipulating that federal dollars may not be used except in cases of rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother.

In the end, Reid may have to bend. Catholic bishops say they can't accept his approach because it would let federally subsidized plans cover abortion. They vow to oppose the health care bill unless, like the House, the Senate enacts stronger language. Democratic senators opposed to abortion are already threatening a battle.

On financing, the House relies mainly on an income tax hike for upper-earners to pay for expanded coverage. The Senate opted for a tax on high-cost insurance plans, a Medicare payroll tax hike on the wealthy and fees on medical industries.

In polls, the House approach is more popular. The Obama administration has signaled it likes the Senate's insurance tax.

That leaves the controversy over creating a government health plan to compete with the insurance industry. It has dominated the debate and remains unresolved.

Both House and Senate bills now provide for a government insurance plan, but Reid's bill would let states opt out. It's not clear that Reid has the votes. He may be able to get a compromise to allow a government plan only if, after a reasonable time, insurance companies fail to deliver lower premiums.

In advance of the Senate debate, the American Medical Association and AARP announced a new ad aimed at calming seniors' fears over Medicare. It features a white-coated man identified as a "real doctor" countering claims from another man identified as a "spin doctor" and will air nationally for two weeks. An AARP spokesman said it was a seven-figure ad buy but declined to give the exact figure.

Schumer appeared on NBC's "Today" show on Monday. □

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Governor faces 37 charges on South Carolina ethics laws

JIM DAVENPORT,

Associated Press Writer

COLUMBIA, South Carolina (AP) — South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford faces ethics charges that he broke state laws by violating rules on airplane travel and campaign money, according to details of the allegations released Monday. The second-term Republican governor has been under scrutiny since he vanished for five days last summer, reappearing to tearfully admit to an extramarital affair with a woman in Argentina he later called his “soul mate.” It is now up to the state

attorney general to decide whether to file criminal charges. Sanford’s lawyers have claimed the allegations involve minor and technical aspects of the law.

A series of Associated Press investigations into his travel showed the governor had for years used state airplanes for political and personal trips, flown in pricey commercial airline seats despite a low-cost travel requirement and failed to disclose trips on planes owned by friends and donors. The State of Columbia newspaper also questioned whether Sanford properly

reimbursed himself from his campaign cash. The ethics commission conducted a three-month probe into the allegations, details of which have been awaited anxiously by legislators contemplating whether to force Sanford from office in January, a year before his term expires.

The panel announced last week that Sanford would face “several” charges but did not reveal the specifics until Monday.

For months, Sanford has insisted he did nothing wrong and served as a better steward of the taxpayer dollar than his



South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford talks at the grand opening of Monster's new 75,000 square foot customer service facility that employs approximately 150 people, in Florence, S.C. on Wednesday, Nov. 18, 2009. A South Carolina ethics panel said Wednesday that Gov. Mark Sanford should face charges he violated state laws tied to a three-month investigation into his travel and campaign finances.

Associated Press

predecessors. But the former congressman's penchant for riling fellow Republicans who control the Legislature has left him with few allies since the startling June news conference during which he admitted to the affair.

Four Republican lawmakers already have filed a resolution that would force Sanford from office because of “dereliction of duty,” and the travel allegations play no part in that move. Their measure deals solely with Sanford's absence from the state, when he led his staff to believe he was hiking the Appalachian Trail while he was in Argentina.

Sanford has brushed off repeated calls from his own party to step down.

Meanwhile, the first lady and their four sons moved out of the governor's mansion. While the Sanfords have said they were trying to reconcile, Jenny Sanford more recently has described the two as separated. She is writing a book about the experience. □

Atty: Fort Hood suspect may use insanity defense

ANGELA K. BROWN,

Associated Press Writer

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — An Army psychiatrist accused of killing 13 people during an attack on his Texas post will likely plead not guilty to the charges against him and may use an insanity defense at his military trial, his attorney said Monday. John Galligan, the civilian attorney for Maj. Nidal Hasan, said he is considering an insanity defense among other options, but that it's too early to determine his defense strategy.

“Based on the evidence thus far, his mental status must be raised,” Galligan told The Associated Press by phone from his office near Fort Hood, about 130 miles southwest of Dallas.

“Anybody who allegedly engages in conduct that is completely contradictory to his lifestyle and military career — an insanity defense has to be considered.”

Hasan has been charged with 13 counts of premeditated murder in the Nov. 5 shooting at Fort Hood, and military officials have said they may file more charges. More than two dozen others were wounded in the shooting spree, which happened at a building where soldiers finalize their wills and are medically screened before they are deployed.

Galligan said military law requires his client to plead not guilty if prosecutors seek the death penalty, but he said that decision has not been made. Hasan remains in intensive care at a San Antonio military hospital, where he was taken after being shot during the attack. At a hearing in his hospital room Saturday, Hasan was ordered to remain in custody until trial.

Galligan said he is frustrated because prosecutors are taking



Fort Hood shooting suspect Army Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan's attorney, Retired Army Col. John P. Galligan answers questions from the media outside Brooke Army Medical Center Saturday Nov. 21, 2009 in San Antonio, Texas, where Maj. Hasan is recovering from wounds he received during the incident. Galligan was speaking after a pre-trial detention hearing.

Associated Press

too long to respond to his questions and requests. He said he has asked why no witnesses were allowed to testify during Saturday's hearing, and why it was closed to the news media. He said he had planned to question Hasan's commander, who in documents indicated Hasan would be moved to an unspecified hospital but did not say when. Fort Hood officials did not immediately return calls seeking comment. □



U.S. Army Sgt. Ryan Gifford of Dallas, Texas, belonging to Alpha troop of the 3-71 Cavalry squadron sits on a rooftop while guarding the perimeter near the town of Baraki Barak, Logar province, Afghanistan, Monday, Nov. 23, 2009.

thousands of foreign troops already in the country since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion. Three U.S. troops were killed in southern Afghanistan on Sunday — two in a bombing and a third in a separate firefight — while another was killed in the east of the country in a bombing on Monday, NATO said in a statement. The deaths bring the number of Americans killed in Afghanistan in November to 15. October was the deadliest month for U.S. troops in the eight-year war, with 59 dead. To the north, insurgents attacked German soldiers and Afghan National Police with grenades and gunfire as the troops drove through an area northwest of Kunduz city, wounding two Afghan policemen. Air support was called in and the insurgents fled, the German military said in a statement. A suicide bombing also struck the same province, which has seen a spike in militant attacks in recent months. The bomber, who was targeting a police convoy, killed five civilians, including three children, the Interior Ministry said.

Another five people were wounded in the attack, which missed the convoy, it said. Separately, three Afghan soldiers were killed by a roadside bomb in the volatile southern province of Helmand, in the Musa Qala district, the Defense Ministry said. It did not give further details. NATO currently has about 71,000 troops in Afghanistan, nearly half of them American. The U.S. military also has another 36,000 soldiers in Afghanistan who serve outside NATO under independent command. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, the top commander in Afghanistan, has said more U.S. forces are needed to head off a failure against Taliban militants. He has recommended about 40,000 additional troops. Obama is expected to announce a decision in the next few weeks. On Monday, he called a high-powered national security team together for their 10th session since August. Alliance spokesman James Appathurai said in Brussels on Monday that NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen is in the midst of intense negotiations aimed at getting more troops, equipment, funding and other resources for the newly established NATO Training Mission, which is tasked with building up Afghanistan's nascent army and police force. President Hamid Karzai said last week during his inauguration to his second five-year term that he wanted Afghan forces to take the lead in ensuring security for his country within five years, with foreign troops relegated to providing support and training. Although several allies have said they will dispatch some reinforcements, most NATO nations have so far shied away from making firm commitments. □

Associated Press

AFGHANISTAN

Continued from Page B1

Obama is considering sending tens of thousands more troops to fight an increasingly virulent insurgency, and pressure has been mounting for a decision. NATO is also calling on allied nations to add to their military presence.

The violence has continued unabated despite the tens of



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R	PRECIOUS				
	daily:	6:00	8:30		
	matinee:	1:00	3:30	late show:	11:00
PG-13	TENDERNESS				
	daily:	9:00			
	matinee:		late show:	11:30	
PG-13	PUSH				
	daily:		9:00		
	matinee:			11:30	
R	THE STEPFATHER				
	daily:	4:15	6:45	9:15	
	matinee:	2:00	late show:	11:45	
PG	THIS IS IT MICHAEL JACKSON				
	daily:	6:00	8:30		
	matinee:	1:00	3:30	late show:	12:00
PG	TIM BURTON'S NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS				3D
	daily:	4:00	6:00		
	matinee:	12:00	2:00	late show:	
PG	SINTERKLAAS EN DE VERDWENEN PAKJESBOOT				
	daily:	4:30	6:45		
	matinee:	12:00	2:15	late show:	

AT PASEO HERENCIA

R	PARANORMAL ACTIVITY				NEW
	daily:	5:30	7:45	10:00	
	matinee:	12:30	3:00	late show:	12:15
PG-13	2012				
	daily:	4:30	8:00		
	matinee:	1:00		late show:	11:15
PG	ASTRO BOY				
	daily:	4:30			
	matinee:	12:00	2:15	late show:	
R	LAW ABIDING CITIZENF				
	daily:		9:15		
	matinee:		late show:	12:00	
PG	THIS IS IT MICHAEL JACKSON				
	daily:	5:45	8:15		
	matinee:	12:45	3:15	late show:	11:00
PG-13	COUPLES RETREAT				
	daily:	7:15	9:45		
	matinee:		late show:	12:15	
PG-13	WHERE WILD THINGS ARE				
	daily:	5:00			
	matinee:	12:30	2:45	late show:	
PG	AMELIA				
	daily:	6:45	9:15		
	matinee:		late show:	11:45	
PG	A CHRITSMAS CAROL 3D				3D
	daily:	4:45	7:00		
	matinee:	12:15	2:30	late show:	

Matinee: sat & sun | Late show: fri & sat

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21 killed in election massacre in the Philippines

HRVOJE HRANJSKI

Associated Press Writer

MANILA, Philippines (AP)

— Gunmen ambushed a caravan of political supporters and journalists on their way to file election papers Monday, killing at least 21 people in a massacre considered shocking even for a region notorious for violence between rival clans. The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines said at least 10 local reporters were part of the convoy. Their newspapers and radio stations have not been able to reach them, raising fears that they were killed. If confirmed, it would be the “largest single massacre of journalists ever,” according to Paris-based Reporters Without Borders. The president’s office termed the attack the worst political violence in recent history.

“Covering the news has always been dangerous in the Philippines, but the wanton killing of so many people makes this an assault on the very fabric of the country’s democracy,” said Bob Dietz, Asia program coordinator for the Committee to Protect Journalists in New York.

Police said the convoy of 40 people was going to register Ismael Mangudadatu to run for provincial governor when they were stopped by some 100 gunmen and taken to a remote mountainous area.

Soldiers and police later found 21 bodies, including those of Mangudadatu’s wife, Genalyn, and his two sisters, sprawled on the ground about three miles from where they were ambushed, military spokesman Lt. Col. Romeo Brawner said.

Mangudadatu, deputy mayor of the town of Buluan and a fierce political rival of the current governor of Maguindanao province, said his wife called him by mobile phone shortly before she and her entourage were abducted. “She said ... they were stopped by 100 uniformed armed men ... then her line got cut off,” he said.

The five vans being used by the

group were found abandoned.

The army and police were searching for the 19 people who were missing, Brawner said, adding that troops were looking for more bodies in areas that appeared to have been recently dug up.

While candidates are typically part of the festive caravans that travel to file election papers, Mangudadatu had sent his family and supporters because he had received death threats. Most of those on the caravan were women because it was thought they would be safer than men.

The identity of the attackers was unclear, but the military said it believed the motive for the attack was political. The Mangudadatus blamed their rivals, the powerful Ampatuan family, which has ruled since 2001.

“They don’t want us to file our candidacy in Maguindanao. It’s like they hold a franchise, they want everything,” said Mangudadatu’s brother, Jong, the mayor of Buluan.

The Ampatuans were unreachable for comment.

The region, among the nation’s poorest and awash with weapons, has been intermittently ruled by the Ampatuan family.

Andal Ampatuan, the family’s patriarch and governor of the province, has survived half a dozen attacks on his life. He has blamed those assaults, one of which claimed a son, on Muslim rivals from the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which has been fighting for a greater autonomy in the southern Philippines for decades.

Government officials called Monday’s attack political and said it was not thought to involve the front.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo ordered her defense chief, Norberto Gonzales, to fly to the south Tuesday to oversee military action against the attackers and secure the area. The coastal province of Maguindanao is part of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which

was created as part of a 1996 peace agreement with a large Muslim rebel group.

Philippine elections are particularly violent in the south because of the presence of armed groups, including Muslim rebels fighting for self-rule in the predominantly Roman Catholic nation, and political warlords who maintain private armies.

The last elections in 2007 were considered peaceful, even though about 130 people were killed. □

Map locates Maguindanao province in the Philippines, where gunmen hijacked a convoy and killed at least 21 people



SOURCE: ESRI

AP

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Woman found 25 hours after Indonesia ferry sank



A sinking ferry survivor is seen floating on the sea before being rescued off Karimun island, Indonesia on Sunday, Nov. 22, 2009. Rescuers saved more than 240 people aboard an Indonesian passenger ferry that sank Sunday in rough waters off Sumatra island, officials said. Search operations were called off after nightfall for the unknown number of passengers still missing.

NINIEK KARMINI

Associated Press Writer

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)

— Rescuers plucked a woman from choppy waters Monday, some 25 hours after she jumped from a crowded ferry that sank in a storm off Indonesia's

Sumatra island. At least 29 people drowned, and 20 others were missing.

A total of 255 survivors have been pulled from the sea since Sunday when the Dumai Express 10 was hit by towering waves and sank about 90 minutes into

an inter-island trip from Batam to Dumai in Riau, a province off Sumatra island in western Indonesia. A second ferry ran aground nearby, but all its passengers were said to be safe.

The rescued woman in her 30s was spotted by

fishermen, and she was in stable condition in a hospital, said Lt. Col. Edwin, a navy officer. Like many Indonesians, he only uses one name.

"Fishermen saw her floating with a life jacket on the rough sea in the rain ... She is very tough," said Edwin. Fishing boats, police patrols, navy warships and a helicopter were still searching for 20 people reported missing, but bad weather and 4-meter (13-foot) high waves were hampering the mission, Edwin said.

The woman was the only one found Monday, he said. Among those missing are six children and four old women, said Rustam Pakaya, the head of the Health Ministry's crisis center.

Edwin said some passengers may have been trapped in the capsized ship, according to survivors. Authorities

have recovered 29 bodies from the water, including those of two children.

Indonesian ferry accidents have killed hundreds of people in recent years. Boats are often overcrowded, and safety regulations are poorly enforced. The vast country spans more than 17,000 islands, and boats are a popular and relatively cheap form of transportation.

The bad weather led to a halt in ferry services Monday in Riau province, off Sumatra.

Thousands of passengers wanting to travel to other islands and neighboring Singapore were stranded at several ports, said Soegiyono, a port official, who also only uses one name.

He could not say when ferries would be allowed to resume sailing. The Meteorology and Geophysics Agency has forecast high waves and rain until Thursday. □

Associated Press

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Brazil: World must engage, not isolate Iran

ALAN CLENDENNING,
Associated Press Writer

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — The world must engage, not isolate Iran in the push for Middle East peace and Iranian leaders should negotiate with Western nations for a “just and balanced” solution to concerns over its nuclear program, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said Monday.

Silva’s comments followed a three-hour private meeting with his increasingly alienated Iranian counterpart, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad — the first Iranian leader to visit Brazil since pro-U.S. Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi toured the South American country in 1965.

But Ahmadinejad made no promises and defiantly said Iran would try to improve its uranium-enrichment technology if it can’t buy enriched uranium abroad.

“If the people ask us to produce ourselves, we should do it and the opportunity we tried to create for the other side will be lost,” said Ahmadinejad, who has repeatedly denied allegations by the United States and its European allies that Iran is embarking on a nuclear weapons program. Iran insists the program is only for peaceful purposes. The two leaders didn’t say whether they discussed Iranian war games that started a day earlier, driving oil prices higher, or the case of three American hikers who were detained in Iran after they crossed an unmarked border while hiking in Iraqi Kurdistan in July. The U.S. State Department had said it hoped Brazil would broach the subject.

Ahmadinejad’s remarks on uranium enrichment came less than a week after Iran indicated it would not export its enriched uranium for further processing, effectively rejecting the latest plan brokered by the International Atomic Energy Agency and aimed at delaying Iran’s ability to build a nuclear weapon.

Under the IAEA plan, Iran would export its uranium for enrichment in Russia

and France where it would be converted into fuel rods, which would be returned to Iran about a year later. The rods can power reactors but cannot be readily turned into weapons-grade material.

While Silva said on his weekly radio show that there’s good reason not to isolate Iran, he also suggested — but did not insist — that Ahmadinejad could work harder to negotiate the stalemate over the nation’s nuclear program.

“I encourage your excellence to continue engagement with interested nations in order to find a just and balanced solution to the Iranian nuclear question,” the Brazilian leader said. For Ahmadinejad, the visit to Brazil could provide some measure of political legitimacy for his nation as it engages in large-scale war games aimed at protecting its nuclear facilities from attack and refuses to back down from developing a nuclear program. And for Brazil, it helps boost the nation’s growing political clout. Oil prices rose above \$78 a barrel Monday amid deepening tensions in the Middle East following the start of the war games and boasts by an air force commander that Iran could deter any military strike by Israel.

Silva, who again defended Iran’s right for a peaceful nuclear program, gave Ahmadinejad a big bear hug and called for diplomacy to push for peace in the Middle East and ease tensions between Iran, the United States and other nations.

“There’s no point in leaving Iran isolated,” the Brazilian leader said on his radio program hours before the two met. “It’s important that someone sits down with Iran, talks with Iran and tries to establish some balance so that the Middle East can return to a certain sense of normalcy.”

Ahmadinejad didn’t utter the word Israel during his comments, but said that Iran wants a Middle East with “prosperity, progress and security for all nations.”

In the past, the Iranian leader has called for the destruction of Israel, which is voicing its own

concern about Iran’s push in Latin America. Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman and Israeli President Shimon Peres visited Brazil and Argentina in July and last week, respectively — the first such high-level visits in decades.

Palestine Authority chief Mahmoud Abbas was also in Brazil last week. During his radio show, Silva proposed a soccer game next March pitting Brazil’s national team against a team comprising Israelis and Palestinians.

Silva, a deft negotiator whose skills were honed as a union leader, says a new tactic is needed with the Iranians that shouldn’t be as punitive as the U.S. or European approach.

The Iranian leader will next visit allies in Bolivia and Venezuela to shore up more



Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, right, and Brazil’s President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva waves to journalists at the Itamaraty palace in Brasilia, Monday, Nov. 23, 2009. Ahmadinejad is on a one-day visit to Brazil.

Associated Press

South American support, but the visit with Silva was significant because he is a center-leftist viewed by Washington as a counterweight to the strident leftist Bolivian and Venezuelan presidents.

“Those concerned about Iran’s penetration into Latin America don’t think this is an overly helpful visit,” said Ray Walser, with The Heritage Foundation, a conservative Washington-based think tank.

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SPORTS

Aruba TODAY

Mauer near-unanimous pick as American League MVP



This is a June 25, 2009, file photo showing Minnesota Twins' Joe Mauer during a baseball game in Milwaukee. Mauer has become only the second catcher in 33 years to win the American League Most Valuable Player Award, Monday, Nov. 23, 2009.

Associated Press

By RONALD BLUM
AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK — Joe Mauer became only the second

catcher in 33 years to win the American League Most Valuable Player Award, finishing first in a near-unanimous vote Monday.

The Minnesota Twins star received 27 of 28 first-place votes and 387 points in balloting by the Baseball Writers' Association of America.

Yankees teammates Mark Teixeira (225 points) and Derek Jeter (193) followed. Detroit's Miguel Cabrera drew the other first-place vote and was fourth with 171 points, one point ahead of the Angels' Kendry Morales.

Mauer became the second Twins player to win in four years, following Justin Morneau in 2006. Morneau gave Mauer a bottle of champagne Monday at the Metrodome.

"Hopefully we can pop that open here a little later," Mauer said. Mauer set a major league record for highest batting average by a catcher and won his third batting title,

becoming the first repeat batting champion since Nomar Garciaparra in 1999-00. "I love catching. I love the demands that are put on me and the responsibilities that I have, although it might beat you up a little bit physically and mentally," Mauer said. "I like being back there making those decisions, you know, for my team."

After missing April with a back injury, Mauer homered on his first swing of the season and went on to lead the AL in batting average (.365), on-base percentage (.444) and slugging percentage (.587), the first AL player to top all three categories in the same season since George Brett in 1980.

Mauer set career bests with 28 homers and 96 RBIs. He had more walks (76) than strikeouts (63) and batted .378 after Morneau's season-ending back injury Sept. 12, helping the Twins overtake Detroit for the AL Central title. He was voted to his third All-Star team

and won his second straight AL Gold Glove.

Mauer said the injury and his minor rehabilitation assignment might have been a "blessing in disguise." He was forced to do more core work on his abdominal muscles.

"In April, I couldn't watch a whole lot of the games," he said. "I'd watch for a little bit and I'd get so frustrated that I wasn't out there."

Born in St. Paul, the 26-year-old can leave the Twins and become a free agent after the 2010 season, when he is to make \$12.5 million. Minnesota is expected to try to sign him to a new deal.

"I've always said it will happen when it needs to happen and I truly believe that," he said. "I'm not the kind of guy that, you know, says by this date we need to have something done."

He enjoys playing in front of his family and friends and his preference is to stay with the Twins.

Continued on Page B12

Real Salt Lake beats LA on penalties for MLS Cup

BY TIM BOOTH
AP Sports Writer

SEATTLE (AP) — Robbie Russell kicked the decisive penalty as the underdog Real Salt Lake beat David Beckham and the star-studded Los Angeles Galaxy in a shootout Sunday for its first Major League Soccer championship. Real Salt Lake goalkeeper Nick Rimando made two saves during the shootout — after the score was locked at 1-1 following extra time — and Galaxy star Landon Donovan missed badly over the crossbar.

After Rimando smothered Edson Buddle's shot, Russell beat backup Los Angeles

goalkeeper Josh Saunders into the lower left corner to set off a wild celebration for a comeback win.

"It's nice to say we're the best team in the league," RSL coach Jason Kreis said. "... My honest opinion is we deserved to win that game."

Robbie Findley scored in the 64th minute to equalize at 1-1 after Mike Magee gave Los Angeles the lead in the 41st minute.

It was the second straight shootout victory for Salt Lake, which beat Chicago 5-4 on penalties last week in the Eastern Conference championship.

Rimando made three saves in

the penalty shootout against Chicago and was at his best again in front of 46,011 fans on Sunday.

Beckham converted for Los Angeles to start the penalty kicks and the first four shots went to form. Jovan Kirovski's shot was saved by Rimando, but Saunders followed by stopping RSL captain Kyle Beckerman.

Donovan, usually reliable from the spot for both the Galaxy and the U.S. national team, then missed well over the crossbar, ripping off his captain's armband as he walked back to midfield, clearly disgusted with his shot.



Real Salt Lake players mob Robbie Russell as they celebrate after Russell made a penalty kick to give Real Salt Lake a win over the Los Angeles Galaxy in the MLS Cup championship soccer match, Sunday, Nov. 22, 2009, in Seattle.

Associated Press

Andy Williams had a chance to give RSL victory, but Saunders smothered his shot. Two rounds later, Williams was able to celebrate with Russell.

It was a stunning and disappointed conclusion for Los Angeles, which entered as a heavy favorite thanks to the star power of Donovan and Beckham. □

Nordqvist wins LPGA Tour Championship

CHRIS DUNCAN

AP Sports Writer

RICHMOND, Texas (AP) — Anna Nordqvist won the LPGA Tour Championship on Monday and Lorena Ochoa finished second to earn her fourth consecutive player of the year award, by one point over Jiyai Shin.

The 22-year-old Nordqvist shot a final-round 65 to finish 13 under par. Ochoa was two strokes back and won the

top player honor when Shin couldn't chip in from the front of the 18th hole.

South Korea's Shin led Ochoa by eight points (156-148) in the season standings entering the tournament. Once Ochoa secured second place, Shin had to finish no worse than seventh to win the player of the year award. The 21-year-old Shin had par on the last hole and finished in a share of eighth at 6 under, giving

Ochoa the player award by a 160-159 score. Point totals are based on top-10 results.

Shin fell short in her bid to win the rookie and player of the year awards, leaving Nancy Lopez as the only player to sweep both titles, in 1978.

"I learned a lot from this year," she said. "I need more focus, concentration, and everything. I really made my goals. I just missed player of the year, but I still had a good year."



Anna Nordqvist, of Sweden, holds the trophy following the final round of the LPGA Tour Championship golf tournament Monday, Nov. 23, 2009, in Richmond, Texas. Nordqvist won the tournament at 13 under par.

Associated Press

NHL Roundup

Stamkos' tip-in gives TB OT win

ATLANTA (AP) — Steven Stamkos scored in overtime to give the Tampa Bay Lightning a 4-3 win over the Atlanta Thrashers on Sunday. The Thrashers, who ended five-game homestand with three straight losses, equalized at 3-3 on Slava Kozlov's second goal and rookie Evander Kane's seventh during a 1:52 span late in the third period. But Stamkos, the No. 1 overall pick in the 2008 draft, ended the game by taking Martin St. Louis' pass from the left circle and beating Atlanta goaltender Ondrej Pavelec with a tip-in. Blackhawks 1, Canucks 0

At Vancouver, Bryan Bickell scored his first goal of the season 1:12 into the third period, while Antii Niemi made 30 saves in Chicago's win. After Niemi made several great saves to keep it scoreless through two periods, defenseman Brian Campbell helped set up the only goal early in the third, skating in from the point, eluding a check on the boards, and cutting into the crease. □



Ochoa also won her fourth straight Vare Trophy, honoring the season's lowest scoring average. Ochoa and Shin were separated by decimal points in that race coming into the tournament.

Nordqvist, meanwhile, earned her second career victory and made it through the season without missing a cut in 15 starts.

Shin and Nordqvist played in the day's final group, right behind Ochoa. The Houstonian Golf and Country Club was still soggy after weekend rain and players were allowed to lift, clean and place their balls.

Nordqvist surged to the lead at 12 under with five consecutive birdies between nos. 8-12. She bogeyed the 13th, then added birdies on 14 and 15 to settle

the tournament and clear the way for Ochoa and Shin to decide their duel.

"I definitely tried to be aggressive," Nordqvist said. "It was pretty tight up the leaderboard, so you were really going to have to shoot low in order to pull it off. I'm just very, very happy that I did."

Shin seemed to take the inside track when Ochoa needed two shots to escape a greenside bunker on the par-3 17th hole. Ochoa sank a bogey putt as Shin and Nordqvist watched from the tee.

But Shin also hit a bunker on the 17th, blasted out short of the green and bogeyed.

Ochoa dropped her approach to the 18th hole about 16 feet away, then curled in the putt □

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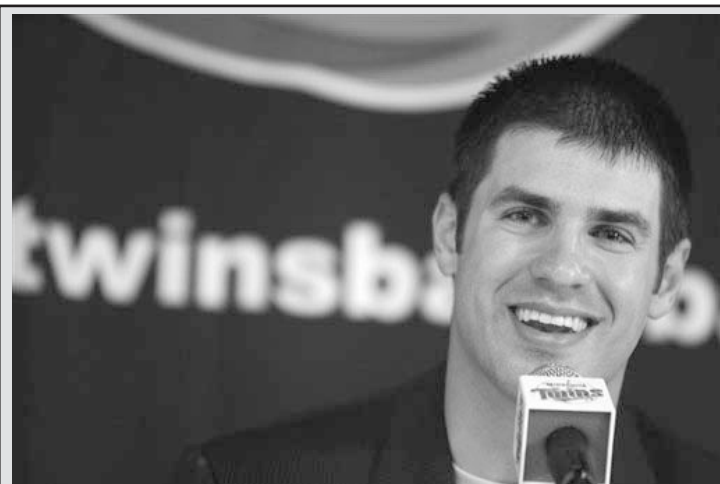
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NBA Roundup

Garnett's jumper gives Celtics OT win over Knicks

NEW YORK (AP) — Kevin Garnett made a jumper to beat the overtime buzzer, giving the Boston Celtics a 107-105 victory over the New York Knicks on Sunday.



Minnesota Twins catcher Joe Mauer speaks about winning the American League Most Valuable Player award, Monday, Nov. 23, 2009 at the Metrodome in Minneapolis.

Associated Press

MVP

Continued from Page B10

"Can we win here? Yes. Definitely. I think so," he said. "And that's ultimately what I would like to do."

Ivan Rodriguez in 1999 had been the only catcher since Thurman Munson in 1976 to win the AL MVP. The other catchers to win in the AL were Mickey Cochrane (1934), Yogi Berra (1951 and 1954-55) and Elston Howard (1963). NL catchers to win were Gabby Hartnett (1935), Ernie Lombardi (1938), Roy Campanella (1951, 1953 and 1955) and Johnny Bench (1970 and 1972).

In addition to Mauer and Morneau, other Twins to win were Zoilo Versalles (1965), Harmon Killebrew (1969) and Rod Carew (1977).

Mauer receives a \$100,000 bonus for winning the award, and Cabrera gets \$200,000 for finishing fourth. Cabrera's first-place vote came from Keizo Konishi of Kyodo News, a member of the Seattle chapter.

Teixeira led the AL with 122 RBIs and tied for first with 39 homers. Jeter was second to Morneau in the 2006 voting and finished third behind Juan Gonzalez and Garciaparra in 1998.

The NL MVP is to be announced Tuesday, and Albert Pujols of the St. Louis Cardinals is favored to repeat. □

Paul Pierce scored a season-high 33 points, and had all of Boston's points in overtime until the final shot. Two Knicks followed Pierce on the final play, leaving Garnett wide open from the top of the key for his 19-footer.

Rajon Rondo finished with 14 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds as Boston won for the second time in five games.

Reserve Al Harrington scored 30 points and David Lee had 22 points and 15 rebounds for the Knicks.

Heat 102, Hornets 101

At Miami, Dwyane Wade had 31 points, and Udonis Haslem hit a jumper with 15.4 seconds left to lift Miami.

Haslem finished with 14 points off the bench, including both field goals for the Heat in the final minute. He tied the game at 100-all with 45 seconds left and then, after Marcus Thornton put the Hornets ahead with a free throw, Haslem won it with a shot from the left side.

Thornton had 24 points and David West added 13 for New Orleans, which is still without injured point guard Chris Paul.

Lakers 101, Thunder 85

At Los Angeles, Kobe Bryant scored 26 points, including an astonishing basket from behind the backboard, as the defending NBA champion Lakers routed Oklahoma City. The Lakers, who squeaked out a 101-98 overtime win

at Oklahoma City on Nov. 3, had this one in control throughout with help from Andrew Bynum's 25 points and nine rebounds. Bryant also had seven assists and six rebounds.

Pau Gasol, playing his second game since coming back from a right hamstring strain, had 15 points, seven rebounds and six assists.

Kevin Durant led Oklahoma City with 19 points.

Bobcats 104, Pacers 88

At Charlotte, Nazr Mohammed scored 18 points, Boris Diaw added 17 and the Bobcats snapped a seven-game losing streak.

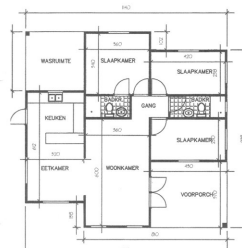
Rookie Derrick Brown scored a season-high 13 and Stephen Jackson added 10 in his first home game with Charlotte, helping the NBA's lowest-scoring team to its best offensive performance in weeks.

Dahntay Jones scored 19 points and Danny Granger had 18 for Indiana, which has lost three straight following a five-game winning streak.

At Toronto, Vince Carter scored 24 points, while Dwight Howard had 17 points and 12 rebounds as Orlando won its fifth straight.

In other NBA games it was, Orlando 104, Toronto 96; Boston 107, New York 105, OT; Charlotte 104, Indiana 88; Miami 102, New Orleans 101; Phoenix 117, Detroit 91; and L.A. Lakers 101, Oklahoma City 85 □

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Honduras:

Depuesto presidente Zelaya pide a América ratificar condena a golpe de estado

TEGUCIGALPA (AP) - El depuesto presidente Manuel Zelaya formuló el domingo un llamado a los gobernantes del hemisferio a que ratifiquen la condena al golpe de estado en Honduras y a que no caigan en “posiciones ambiguas o imprecisas” como la de Estados Unidos, según dijo. “En estos momentos tan difíciles a los hermanos países de América, solicitamos su solidaridad con Honduras...”, dijo Zelaya desde la embajada de Brasil donde se encuentra refugiado al leer una nota a través de la emisora Radio Globo y que dijo haría llegar a todos los presidentes del hemisferio. Zelaya formuló el llamado a una semana de las elecciones presidenciales el 29 de noviembre, consideradas por el gobierno de facto de Roberto Micheletti como la

salida definitiva a la crisis política que agobia este país desde el pasado 28 de junio cuando Zelaya fue derrocado por un golpe de estado. El Congreso, respaldado por la Corte Suprema de Justicia, consideró que no hubo golpe de estado sino una sucesión presidencial y designó a Micheletti como presidente interino. “Apelamos a mantener su firmeza en la ejecución de las resoluciones aprobadas (por la OEA y la ONU) y no adoptar posiciones ambiguas o imprecisas como las que despliega hoy el gobierno de los Estados Unidos de América”, dijo el depuesto mandatario dirigiéndose a los gobernante del hemisferio. Washington “con su postura final, ha venido a debilitar el proceso de revertir el golpe de estado, mostrando la división de la comunidad internacional.

Al alimentar este golpe de estado pone en riesgo la seguridad democrática del hemisferio y la estabilidad de los presidentes de América, con el surgimiento de las castas militares sobre la autoridad civil”, sostuvo. Zelaya ha dicho que Estados Unidos cambió de posición en la crisis hondureña porque expresó su condena al golpe de estado y después expresó su respaldo a las elecciones. El subsecretario de Estado Adjunto estadounidense para Asuntos del Hemisferio Occidental, Craig Kelly, en una visita a Honduras a mediados de semana para impulsar el diálogo y el cumplimiento del acuerdo Tegucigalpa-San José firmado entre Zelaya y Micheletti para una salida a la crisis, reiteró que los comicios son fundamentales para resolver la crisis. □



El candidato oficialista para las elecciones del 29 de noviembre en Honduras, Elvin Santos, cierra su campaña electoral con un concentración en Tegucigalpa, el domingo 22 de noviembre de 2009. (AP foto/Arnulfo Franco)

Mayor tensión Perú-Chile frenaría comercio largo plazo

LIMA (Reuters) - El próspero flujo comercial y las inversiones entre Perú y Chile podrían frenarse en el largo plazo si recrudecen las tensiones en torno a la denuncia de Lima sobre un presunto espionaje a favor de Santiago, que llevó a la relación entre los vecinos a su nivel más bajo en años. Sin embargo, el intercambio de bienes continuaría creciendo en el corto y mediano plazo entre los vecinos, dos de las economías más abiertas de la región que negociaron este año un Tratado de Libre Comercio (TCL). La acusación del presunto espionaje militar se produce en momentos en que los socios comerciales -cuya relación sufre de altibajos desde que se enfrentaron en una guerra a fines del siglo XIX- mantienen un litigio en una corte internacional por un diferendo en sus límites marítimos. “Según lo visto en los últimos 15 años, que ha habido problemas de la misma índole, eso (el intercambio comercial) no melló”, afirmó Oscar Vidarte, profesor de la privada Universidad Católica de Perú. El analista económico y también profesor

de la peruana Universidad Católica, Jaime García, más bien consideró que “esta situación se va a ir reencaminando”. El caso del espionaje estalló a inicios de mes cuando Perú confirmó que un agente de la Fuerza Aérea (FAP) fue detenido y acusado de enviar información reservada a Chile. Santiago ha rechazado las acusaciones. Tras la denuncia, los países vecinos han tenido cruces verbales en los que el presidente peruano, Alan García, catalogó el espionaje de “repulsivo” y propio de una “republiqueta” y su par chilena, Michelle Bachelet, rechazó las expresiones calificándolas de “ofensivas y altisonantes”. Lima amenazó con revisar la relación con Santiago si el Gobierno chileno no investiga las pruebas que le envió y sanciona a los responsables. Sin embargo, las advertencias de Perú, hasta el momento, no han llegado al terreno comercial ni económico. Sólo la oposición más radical en Perú ha reclamado romper relaciones con Chile, algo que Lima ha descartado. □

Lula defiende encuentro con líder iraní

BRASILIA (AP) - El presidente de Brasil defendió el lunes una programada entrevista con su controversial colega iraní, Mahmud Ahmadinejad, luego que grupos judíos, de derechos humanos y homosexuales en la nación sudamericana repudiaron la presencia del líder que ha negado el Holocausto y ha llamado a la destrucción de Israel. Lula recibió a Ahmadinejad con un abrazo en la sede de la cancillería brasileña, mientras al otro lado de la calle, decenas de manifestantes coreaban consignas a favor y contra de la visita del líder iraní, ondeando banderas de Irán y de Israel. “De nada sirve dejar a Irán aislado. Si Irán es un actor importante en toda esa discordia, es importante que alguien se siente con Irán, converse con Irán y busque un equilibrio para que volvamos a tener una cierta normalidad en Oriente Medio”, dijo Lula en su programa radial Café con el Presidente. Ahmadinejad se encontró el lunes con Lula en el inicio de una gira internacional que lo llevará además a Bolivia y Venezuela, y posteriormente a Gambia y Senegal. El gobernador de Sao Paulo y potencial candidato presidencial de la oposición, José Serra, criticó la visita de Ahmadinejad el carácter dictatorial de su régimen y la participación de iraníes en el atentado contra un centro judío en Buenos Aires en 1994. □

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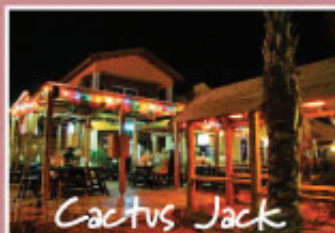


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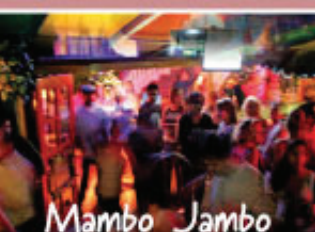
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